VERTIGO

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

BOOK ONE

"A remarkable examination and evisceration of American pulp tradition."

—NEIL GAIMAN

MATT WAGNER • GUY DAVIS
JOHN WATKISS • R.G. TAYLOR • DAVID HORNUNG

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SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE BOOK ONE

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INTRODUCTION

When the social critic C.L.R. James first arrived in the United States from Trinidad and Great Britain in 1938, he found it mystifying that so many working men went to the newsstand each week to buy comic books. But soon enough, as James reported in *Mariners Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*, he was also heading out each week for his favorite comics. Because the best comics encapsulated the most important workaday myths of his age, he had learned to love them.

I wonder if James numbered DC's original Golden Age Sandman among his favorites. That Sandman first appeared at the end of 1941, just as the United States entered World War II in a fashion that forever ended the nation's historic custom of isolationism. The character of the Sandman, at least initially, broke with the customs of super-heroism in two respects. First, Wesley Dodds had no real superpower. His prowess stemmed from Yankee ingenuity, in the form of a powerful chemical agent that he used to disable his opponents. Unlike other heroes of the time, he did not use his invention on himself to enhance his abilities; in fact, he had to wear a gas mask to prevent the substance from overcoming him along with his enemies. This lent the Sandman's earliest adventures an unusual degree of toughness (though their plots were often matchstick-thin), in the spirit of film noir and the hard-boiled detective stories of the day, as well as a degree of realism quite unusual for comics of the time. In a way, this quality brought the Sandman closer to the superheroes of the late 1960s.

Second, and more important, the Golden Age Sandman's sidekick was not a younger version of the main character, but an adult woman! At the time that those early stories were published, Dian Belmont took on a role possessed by no other woman in the Golden Age universe. She didn't serve as a prop character who got into jams from which she had to be rescued; nor was she a superheroine herself. She was an independent woman who accompanied the Sandman on his adventures and shared the same risks as him. (This marks her as far different from, say, Lois Lane, for whom danger was always enormous, while to Superman, it was, of course, fundamentally nonexistent.) Furthermore, Dian became aware of Wesley Dodds' secret identity at the beginning of their relationship, and collaborated with him openly. All of this implies a maturity behind the love interest that remains quite anomalous in any mainstream comics universe.

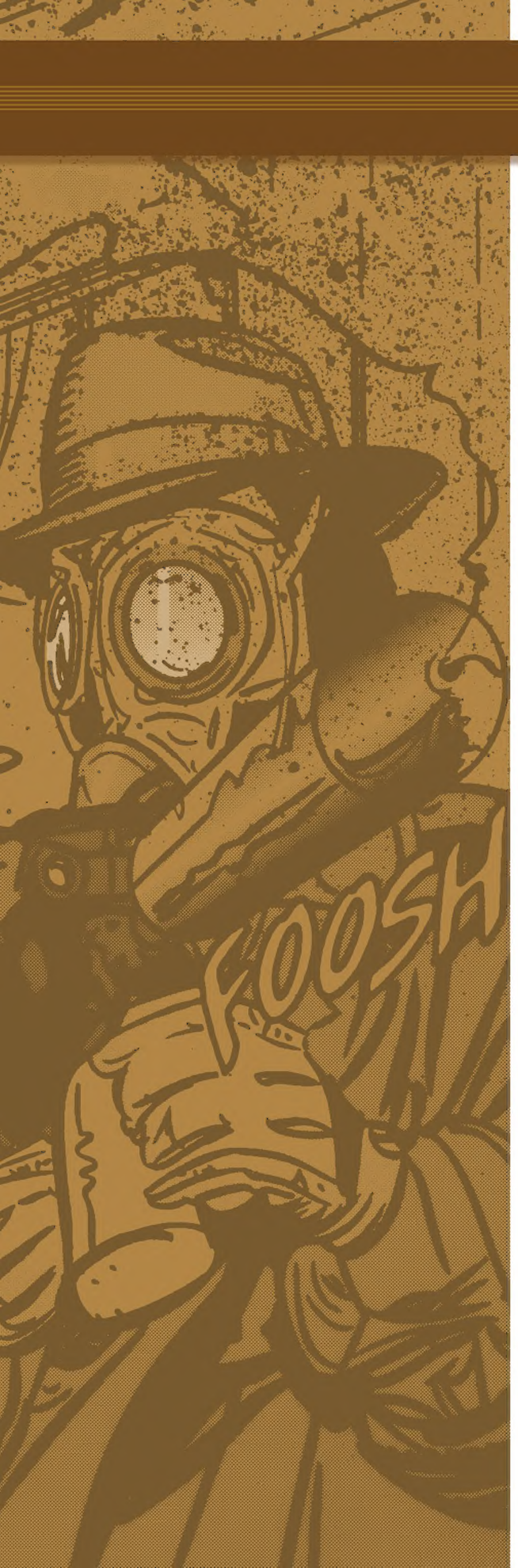
That's probably why the Golden Age Sandman soon lost Dian and gained instead a more stereotyped sidekick: a young man bent on emulating his master, with subtexts that would, I suppose, make any healthy heterosexual preadolescent cringe, if only he consciously perceived them. It may also be why the Sandman stories did not survive World War II, but instead petered out in the early months of 1946. Then, more than forty years later, Neil Gaiman resurrected the title, if not the character.

Gaiman's Sandman exists outside the superhero realm altogether. He's a god, or at least a demiurge. His sidekicks include a raven, the biblical brothers Cain and Abel, a being that appears in human form but is, in fact, a plot of land, and six assorted sub-Olympian siblings. This new Sandman dwells outside space and time, in the world of dreams; he enters the human realm at his peril. (Gaiman's explanation of Wesley Dodds' anomalous turn as the Golden Age Sandman has to do with his "real" Sandman spending several decades as the captive of a Crowleyian cult, during which time humanity's ability to dream deteriorated—a scenario you will not grasp any better if I pretend to entirely understand it, which I don't. Neil Gaiman is a great writer, and one for whom this kind of exposition is often, shall we say, appropriately secondary.)

For a lot of contemporary fans of the Sandman, the first issue of Matt Wagner and Guy Davis' SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE in 1993 promised nothing more than a title that might relate to Gaiman's series in the way that the old *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* television series related to Hitchcock's films. SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE would be, I imagined, a sub-universe of slight stories in which the same rules—macabre suspense in Hitchcock's case, pessimistic surrealism in THE SANDMAN's—applied. The opening page of the first issue pulled me further into this delusion. But with the first panel of the second page, Wagner and Davis detonated a genuine surprise: The world of this Sandman's dreaming is *our* world—or at least it more or less plays by the rules of the realistic everyday. Once again, Wesley Dodds is the Sandman. Once again, Dian Belmont becomes his partner. But in almost every other way, SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE ultimately diverges just as far from the original Golden Age Sandman as Gaiman's creation.

Wagner and Davis' new world occupies a far different visual and narrative space. It is dark, where the Golden Age stories were light. From the first panel, Davis and colorist David Hornung do an especially effective job of rendering an atmosphere that is both urban-gritty and, even in the drawing room scenes, evocative of the late 1930s time period in which it is set—more so, in fact, than most recent noir films. The SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE characters and stories are complex, where the earlier ones were simple. In this new series, virtues are uncertain and the possibilities of evil are far more pervasive and more difficult to vanquish.

You could say that this reflects the historic progression of comics art—and it does, except that even there Wagner and Davis add an additional tincture. Other mainstream comics do not deal explicitly with decadent Manhattan nightlife, the specter of fascism, child abuse and incest. Other mainstream comics certainly do not squarely confront racism as a matter-of-fact part of the puzzle of the present. And if almost all mainstream comics do use the ambiguous and fractured nature of reality and of realism to help drive their stories, none has ever used it with quite such potent force. To



say that SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE derives its noir atmosphere from its setting in the late '30s interval between the Great Depression and World War II would get it precisely backward—these stories *must* be set in that period because of what's at stake in them, which is the same thing that has always been at stake since that period began: the question of whether thinking, feeling human life can survive in a world in which corruption has pervaded all precincts.

The character initially used to evoke racism in the series plays a principal role that would, in a conventional story, represent stability and perhaps even the center of good: Lieutenant Burke, the cop whom we first meet as he tracks the kidnappings of "The Tarantula" in parallel with the Sandman. But the pencil-mustached Burke isn't even an antihero—he's just another part of Wagner and Davis' stew of amoralists. He brings us our confrontation with racism casually, over a friendly drink, telling a colleague who asks about his family, "Had a sister. But she married a nigger." This statement does more than establish, in a nanosecond, the flaws in Burke's character—it also shows us, with instant clarity, why Wesley Dodds may never make his peace with Burke, who is not only part of but indeed a personification of the real problem that makes the Sandman's interventions necessary: not racism, but numbness to the condition of his fellow human beings—for the person to whom Burke does such great violence with that statement isn't his brother-in-law (who enters it only as an afterthought), but Burke's own sister, whose existence his dialogue attempts to erase.

Dodds dons his Sandman garb to catch criminals, but rather than crime, it's this kind of depraved callousness that he really fights. So the Sandman can speak to Dian's father, District Attorney Larry Belmont, who (like Wesley's own father) contains his share of blindness and weakness. Belmont won't consciously participate in the swindling, thievery, violence and excess that surrounds him, even if he won't oppose it very forcefully, either. He's too numb to act radically, which is both his saving grace and his worst flaw.

In contrast, Wesley Dodds' acute awareness of spiritual evil renders him a completely isolated loner. It is this "terrible emptiness" that pulls at the mind of this world-class insomniac; when he does finally fall asleep and begin to dream, he can only experience nightmares. Dodds becomes the Sandman, a vigilante of justice, after he despairs of awakening his neighbors. Indeed, for the most part, he remains invisible to all his fellow citizens. Only two people can see him when he doesn't want to be seen: Lieutenant Burke spots his shadow on a fire escape (actually, Burke *hears* him first), and, in one of the first story's most important scenes, Dian Belmont spots him crouching in the dark of the ladies' room at police headquarters.

Dian can see the Sandman in the dark! This startles Dodds as much as it does her—or us. Saying that the nature of this initial confrontation causes Wesley to fall in love would be going too far, but not by much. In Dian Belmont, he has found the Sandman's soul mate, his completing polar opposite. He can't sleep, and—at least in the beginning of the series—she can't wake up. Sleeping and oversleeping as she does, Dian Belmont can't—or claims that she can't—dream. Nevertheless, she spends most of the first half of "The Tarantula" either in bed or showing up late. It's only when she takes action to discover what she can about the secrets invading her world—when she breaks into her father's safe and peruses his files—that she comes fully to life. The part of Davis' characterization that I love best, in fact, is the way he transforms Dian physically throughout this first story, so that at the end, she emerges from puffy, sleepy-eyed drowsiness to taut, wide-eyed brightness.

It takes the creators several more storylines to snap Dian fully awake to the grimness of the world around her. But by the end of this brilliant beginning, she stands well on the way to a transformation that will, someday, make her capable of seeing—and seeing *through*—as much as the Sandman. For now, her continuing blind spots can be summarized by her inability to quite figure out Wesley Dodds' role in all this. In this regard, Dian represents the reader more fully than any superhero, or any Sandman, ever could. But then, we are not as deeply in need of such perceptions as she is, because we travel in the company of Matt Wagner and Guy Davis and all of their talented collaborators—who, like all the greatest storytellers, guide us with maps of the most excellent quality. In this fashion, they illuminate a concrete world that exists far beyond the pages of their comic book. Which is why we—or at least, I—love them and it.

—Dave Marsh, 1995

Dave Marsh has been writing about rock music and popular culture almost as long as Wesley Dodds has been fighting crime. An acknowledged expert on "Louie Louie" and other forms of censorship, he has written biographies of Bruce Springsteen, Elvis and Michael Jackson and a history of The Who, as well as editing Rolling Stone, Creem *and* Rock & Rap Confidential.

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

DC

VERTIGO

NO. 1
APR 93

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

"...he withdrew a strange and deadly weapon and fired straight at me..."

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE™

by Matt Wagner & Guy Davis

THE TARANTULA'S ACT

GAVIN WILSON

"Web-like strands
of death
attach themselves
on the edge
of my dream,
there to ensnare
innocence
and hope."

THE TARANTULA

FIRST, THERE IS THE WOMAN. SOFT...

...BUT INDISTINCT. LIKE WORDS WRITTEN IN DARKNESS OR THE SMELL OF A RIPENING PEACH.

FOR SOON SHE IS ECLIPSED--BY HIM.

THE MAN IN BLACK.

BURNING. IMMOBILE. BOUND TO THE CENTER OF MY DREAMSCAPE.

AND THEN COMES THE GAS, WITH ROW UPON ROW OF SOLDIERS...

...DECEIVING THEMSELVES AS IMMUNE.

MEN DIE, GAGGING ON THE FOAM OF THEIR OWN BOILING STOMACHS.

AND THEN THE GAS BEGINS TO CONGEAL.

WEB-LIKE STRANDS OF DEATH...

...ATTACH THEMSELVES ON THE EDGE OF MY DREAM.

THERE TO ENSARE INNOCENCE AND HOPE.

AS ALWAYS, I AWAKE...

...AND SHAKE WITH FEAR LEST I RETURN TO THE DARK, BARREN LANDS OF MY DREAMING.

DIAN, NO! YOU ARE NOT SPENDING ALL EVENING IN HARLEM AGAIN!

YOU GIRLS. UNESCORTED, AT THOSE...CLUBS.

DADDY...

SHOULDN'T THAT BE, "YOU WOMEN"? THE YOUNGEST OF US IS TWENTY-FIVE!

BUT THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S DAUGHTER SHOULDN'T BE SEEN...

DOING WHAT? HAVING FUN? DADDY, DARLING, TRY TO LEAVE YOUR EIGHTEENTH-AMENDMENT-MORALS IN THE PAST. THIS IS 1938, AFTER ALL. NOW, WHERE'S MY BAG?

IN MY STUDY.

ER, I MEAN... WAIT JUST A MOMENT! THIS DISCUSSION IS NOT OVER! DIAN...

...I AM SPEAKING TO YOU!

THERE.

NO, DADDY...

CLIC

...YOU ARE SPEAKING AT ME.

LOOK, I KNOW IT'S NOT YOUR FUND-RAISER SORT OF CROWD, BUT THE NIGHT CLUBS ARE FINE, JUST FINE.

CLIC

DON'T WORRY SO.

2

REALLY. WE JUST WANT TO HAVE A LITTLE FUN WHILE WE CAN... BEFORE OUR LIVES MUST COMMENCE.

WHICH WOULD BE *WHEN*, EXACTLY? YOU GRADUATED OVER A YEAR--

:*Groan*: NOT AGAIN, DADDY. I'M SURE THE WORLD WILL WAIT UNTIL I'M READY FOR IT.

TAXI

ON DUTY

BUT THE FLOOR SHOW WOULDN'T THINK OF IT. SEE YOU IN THE MORNING, DADDY!

YELLOW TAXI CO.

DI--

HHMPH.

WE'LL JUST SEE HOW THE FLOOR SHOW SOUNDS AFTER A NICE LITTLE SHAKE-DOWN. O'DONALD OWES ME A FAVOR...

AND THOSE DAMN MUSICIANS USUALLY HAVE SOMETHING ILLEGAL ABOUT THEM. MUGGLES AND SUCH...

EIGHTEENTH-AMENDMENT-MORALS, MY A--

A--A--A--A...

3

WHO...?

WHO--

WHO ARE YOU?!

GET OUT OF THIS HOU--

ACK--

4

HAAK! KOFF-- KOFF-- KOFF--

=WHEEEEEEEEZE=

WH-WHAT...

...DO YOU...

...WANNN--

WHUMP=

THE TARANTULA
ACT·ONE

IT HAS BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE THE REPEAL OF PROHIBITION--ILLUSIONARY LEGISLATION AT BEST. MORAL STRENGTHS CANNOT BE GOVERNED. THEY MUST BE EARNED.

THE COUNTRY NOW STANDS MIRED IN A BACKLASH OF PARTIES AND PLATITUDES. OUR COLLECTIVE HEADS ARE STUCK IN THE SAND.

NOBODY SEES WHAT'S COMING.

YOU FELLAS ARE GETTING TIGHT. DIAN'S NEVER GOING TO FORGIVE YOU FOR GETTING SUCH A HEAD START ON HER.

AND SPEAKING OF THE LOVELY MISS BELMONT...

LADIES...DON'T TELL ME I'M THE LAST TO ARRIVE?

YES, BUT CATHERINE ONLY *JUST* GOT HERE. AND, LOOK...

SHE'S ALREADY GOT AN ENTOURAGE.

AS USUAL, I THINK WE NEED ANOTHER ROUND OF AMMUNITION HERE. OH, WAITER...

SO, CATH, STILL PUMMELLING THE HEARTS OF MEN, I SEE.

OF COURSE, DARLING. CAN I HELP IT IF THEY ALL HAVE SUCH SIMPLY *MARVEL-OUS* TASTE?

6

I SUPPOSE NOT. SOME CROWD TONIGHT, YES?

MMM, THE STARS DO LIKE TO SHINE IN HARLEM.

THERE'S BERT LAHR AND TALLULAH BANKHEAD. THEY'RE IN THAT SHOW...

OH! AND THERE'S WILLIAM POWELL!

I PREFER THE OFF-THE-FLOOR CROWD MYSELF.

I SEE MEYER LANSKY BACK THERE, AND I *THINK* THAT'S BUGSY SIEGEL.

OH, YOU *ARE* A WICKED ONE, VAN DER MEER.

IRRESISTIBLE, MY DEAR BELMONT. THE WORD IS IRRESISTIBLE.

7

(GROOOAN)

THERE'S JUST SO MUCH... SUNLIGHT DURING THE DAY.

JESUS, WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO FIND A CAB AT THIS HOUR?

IT'S ONLY SIX, NU--NOT LIKE IT'S REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS... ;URP!

WELL, THIS BOAT IS FULL. LADIES...

"WOTTA NIGHT! WOTTA CROWD! WOTTA MOB!"

C'MON, DIAN. HERE'S ANOTHER TAXI.

Make Mine

950 FIFTH AVENUE, DRIVER.

I MUST SAY I'M SURPRISED TO BE RIDING HOME WITH *YOU*, CATH. YOU HAD SO MUCH... COMPANIONSHIP ALL EVENING.

TRUTH TO TELL, I'M ACTUALLY RATHER SPOKEN FOR THESE DAYS.

YOU? THE SOCIAL BUTTERFLY? WHO IS HE?

MMMM... LET'S JUST CALL HIM ONE OF THE OFF-THE-FLOOR CROWD.

;GASP! YOU'RE JOKING! GOD FORBID, IF YOUR *FATHER* EVER DISCOVERS...

OH, BY THAT POINT IT'LL BE OVER. I'M NOT FOOLING MYSELF ABOUT THE PERMANENCY OF THIS BUT, FOR NOW--IT'S A GRAND TIME.

AND FOR *RIGHT* NOW, THE SUN'S UP AND IT'S BED-TIME. BE SEEING YOU SOON, DIAN.

SLEEP WELL, OH *WICKED* ONE.

Everfood MILK

UH?

MMPhh--

CHNK

DIAN!

KNOCK KNOCK

(groooan) YES! YES... COME IN--

COME IN...

HMPH--ANOTHER "FUN" EVENING, I SEE.

DADDY... I WAS A GOOD LITTLE GIRL. RODE HOME WITH CATHERINE...

NO LECTURES. JUST A REMINDER THAT YOU PROMISED TO JOIN ME FOR THE MAYOR'S LIBRARY GALA AT THE WARWICK THIS EVENING.

(groooan) THAT'S RIGHT. I DID...

GOOD. I, AH... I'LL BE BUSY FOR MOST OF TODAY SO YOU CAN MEET ME THERE. 8:00. TRY TO BE UP BY THEN?

9

IT HAS BEEN LITTLE OVER A YEAR SINCE MY RETURN TO NEW YORK. WHAT HAD BEEN THE GREATEST CITY ON EARTH IS NOW A FACADE OF CORRUPTION AND DENIAL. FASHIONABLE FUND-RAISERS ABOUND WHILE POVERTY ENDURES AND THE THREAT OF WAR LINGERS STAGNANT IN THE AIR.

STILL, I HAD AGREED TO ATTEND AN EVENT BENEFITING THE LIBRARY. THE CAUSE WAS RIGHT EVEN IF THE ATTITUDE WAS WRONG.

ATTITUDE! THAT'S WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD TODAY! EVERYBODY SEARCHING FOR AN ENEMY. I TELL YOU, BELMONT...

...IF I WAS STILL ON THE BENCH, I--

MMM, YES, YOUR HONOR. I, UMM...

WHAT'S *WITH* YOU, LARRY?

HAD YOUR HEAD IN THE CLOUDS ALL DAMNED EVENING.

OH, SORRY YOUR HONOR. I'M LOOKING FOR MY DAUGHTER. SHE'S SUPPOSED TO--

AND HAS. HERE I AM, DADDY... AS PROMISED.

AHHH...LOVELY AS EVER AND IN PLENTY OF TIME.

NO MATTER WHAT YOUR OLD MAN MIGHT SAY.

HA-HA. WHY, JUDGE SCHAFFER, YOU KNOW DADDY...

...HE WON'T BE SATISFIED UNTIL I'M EITHER ENROLLED OR EMPLOYED. OR MARRIED.

DIAN! I WANT YOU TO GET YOUR LAW DEGREE. YOU KNOW THAT--

OH, BELMONT! SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT HERE'S SOMEONE TO WHOM YOU SHOULD BE *RE*-INTRODUCED.

10

THIS IS WESLEY DODDS YOU REMEMBER... EDWARD'S SON!

HELLO, THOMAS.

JUDGE THOMAS SCHAFFER WAS ONE OF MY FATHER'S OLDEST FRIENDS. IT WAS HIS REQUEST THAT I COME OUT TO THIS PARTY.

WES, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET DISTRICT ATTORNEY LAWRENCE BELMONT-- AND THIS IS HIS DAUGHTER DIAN.

OH. AND HELLO TO YOU BOTH.

WHY, YES! I'D HEARD EDWARD'S SON HAD MOVED BACK TO NEW YORK AND TAKEN OVER THE BUSINESS.

SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR FATHER, WESLEY. HE'LL BE MISSED.

THANK YOU, MR. BELMONT.

IN FACT, I'M COLLECTING MEMORABILIA ON MY FATHER. MIGHT YOU HAVE ANY OLD PHOTOS, OR LETTERS FROM HIM...?

WHY, OF COURSE, MY BOY! FEEL FREE TO STOP BY OUR BROWN-STONE ANY TIME. WE'RE AT-- EH?

YES, I KNOW WHERE YOU LIV-- HUH? OH, THE MAYOR...

AND NOW, A VERY SPECIAL ENDORSEMENT FOR TONIGHT'S EVENT, FROM THE PRIDE OF THE YANKEES-- JOLTIN' JOE DIMAGGIO!

LARRY BELMONT SEEMED BLUSTERY BUT GENUINE, AND HIS DAUGHTER WAS... POWERFUL. I COULD TELL. USED TO ATTEN-TION.

INTRIGUED BY MY OWN APPARENT LACK OF INTEREST IN HER.

When heroes are clowns
Who jump, run and hop
No honour in service.
Ne'er doctor nor cop

OH! UM... YES, MISS BELMONT?

OH! UH...DIAN. PLEASE, CALL ME DIAN. ER...THAT IS...

YOU DON'T *LIKE* PROFESSIONAL SPORTS, MR. DODDS?

NO, *MISS BELMONT*, I FIND THEM RATHER POINTLESS. AS IS THE HYSTERIA THEY CULTIVATE. THE ROMANS USED TO CALL IT...

BREAD AND CIRCUSES.

YES, EXACTLY, DIAN. BREAD AND CIRCUSES. NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...

BEAUTIFUL, TOO.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY, I'M SORRY BUT WE NEED TO TALK. I'M AFRAID IT'S RATHER IMPORTANT.

O'DONALD! WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?

OH-DEAR-GOD! WHEN?

EARLY THIS MORNING, WE SUPPOSE. THE NOTE SHOWED UP LESS THAN AN HOUR AGO.

MY FATHER ALWAYS REFERRED TO THOMAS SCHAFFER AS FOOLISHLY CARING. RETIRING FROM THE BENCH -- THE ONLY SELF-CONCERNED ACT OF HIS RECENT YEARS -- HE NOW INTENSELY REGRETS.

I CALL HIM NOT A FOOL, BUT RATHER A DREAMER, A MAN WHO ENVISIONS SOMETHING BETTER -- OR WHO DREADS SOMETHING WORSE.

OFFER YOU A LIFT HOME, THOMAS?

CERTAINLY, M'BOY!

I'M GLAD YOU CAME OUT TONIGHT, WESLEY. IT DOES YOU NO GOOD BEING SO HOLED UP IN THE REMNANTS OF YOUR FATHER'S AFFAIRS.

SOMEBODY'S GOT TO LOOK OUT FOR THE BUSINESS NOW.

HMMPH -- WOULD THAT *EVERYONE* HAD SUCH A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY.

SUCH AS...?

WELL, THE GODDAMN POLICE FOR A START! I JUST OVERHEARD THEY'VE GOT SOME MYSTERIOUS KIDNAPPER ON THEIR HANDS.

CALLS HIMSELF THE TARANTULA, CAN-YOU-BELIEVE-IT?!

AND THEY'VE BEEN *EXPECTING* SOMETHING, LIKE THIS!

HOW SO?

SEVERAL KNOWN FELONS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN FOUND UNCONSCIOUS AT THE VERY SCENE OF THEIR CRIMES -- FOR NO APPARENT REASON!

SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON OUT THERE AND THEY *KNEW* IT.

13

CLACK

OHHH, I'M SORRY TO GET SO MAUDLIN, WES. THE WORLD'S A MESS, BUT IF I'M GOING TO BITCH ABOUT IT SO...

I NEVER SHOULD HAVE RETIRED. THANKS FOR THE RIDE, M'BOY.

YOU CAN'T SOLVE ALL OF THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS, TOM. AT LEAST, BE GLAD FOR THOSE YOU CAN.

AND, PLEASANT DREAMS.

MY FATHER'S INTERESTS WERE MANY AND HIS HOLDINGS, EVEN GREATER. OIL, STEEL, FOREIGN AUTO MARKETS-- IT SEEMED THAT EVERY VENTURE HE ATTEMPTED TURNED OUT IN HIS FAVOR.

BUT HIS PROSPERITY WAS INSULAR-- MEANT TO PROTECT HIM FROM WHAT HE HAD SEEN IN THE GREAT WAR. SADLY, HE NEVER REALLY LEARNED...

NIGHTMARES ARE QUITE INESCAPABLE.

GOODNIGHT, MR. WESLEY DODDS.

AND PLEASANT DREAMS.

CLACK

YOU KNOW, DADDY, I'M ACTUALLY RATHER GLAD YOU MADE MADE ME GO TO THE PARTY. WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THAT WESLEY DODDS FELLOW? I FOUND HIM QUITE...INTERESTING.

DIAN...

I MEAN, WHEN EVERY OTHER MAN IN THAT ROOM WAS SLAVERING OVER THAT BALL PLAYER, HE...

DIAN, PLEASE, I NEED TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING. SIT DOWN...

DADDY, WHAT'S WRONG? YOU ACT LIKE WE'D BEEN INVADED..,

NO. IT'S ABOUT YOUR FRIEND, CATHERINE...

VAN DER MEER?

YES, SHE... I'M AFRAID SHE'S BEEN... KIDNAPPED.

SHE NEVER MADE IT HOME LAST NIGHT. HER PARENTS RECEIVED A RANSOM NOTE EARLIER THIS EVENING.

KIDNAPPED..,? BUT, I RODE...

I KNOW. I TOLD THE POLICE.

HER ABDUCTOR... UH, SEEMS TO CALL HIMSELF THE TARANTULA. TRUTH IS, WE'VE BEEN HALF EXPECTING SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

WELL, WHAT'S HE WANT?

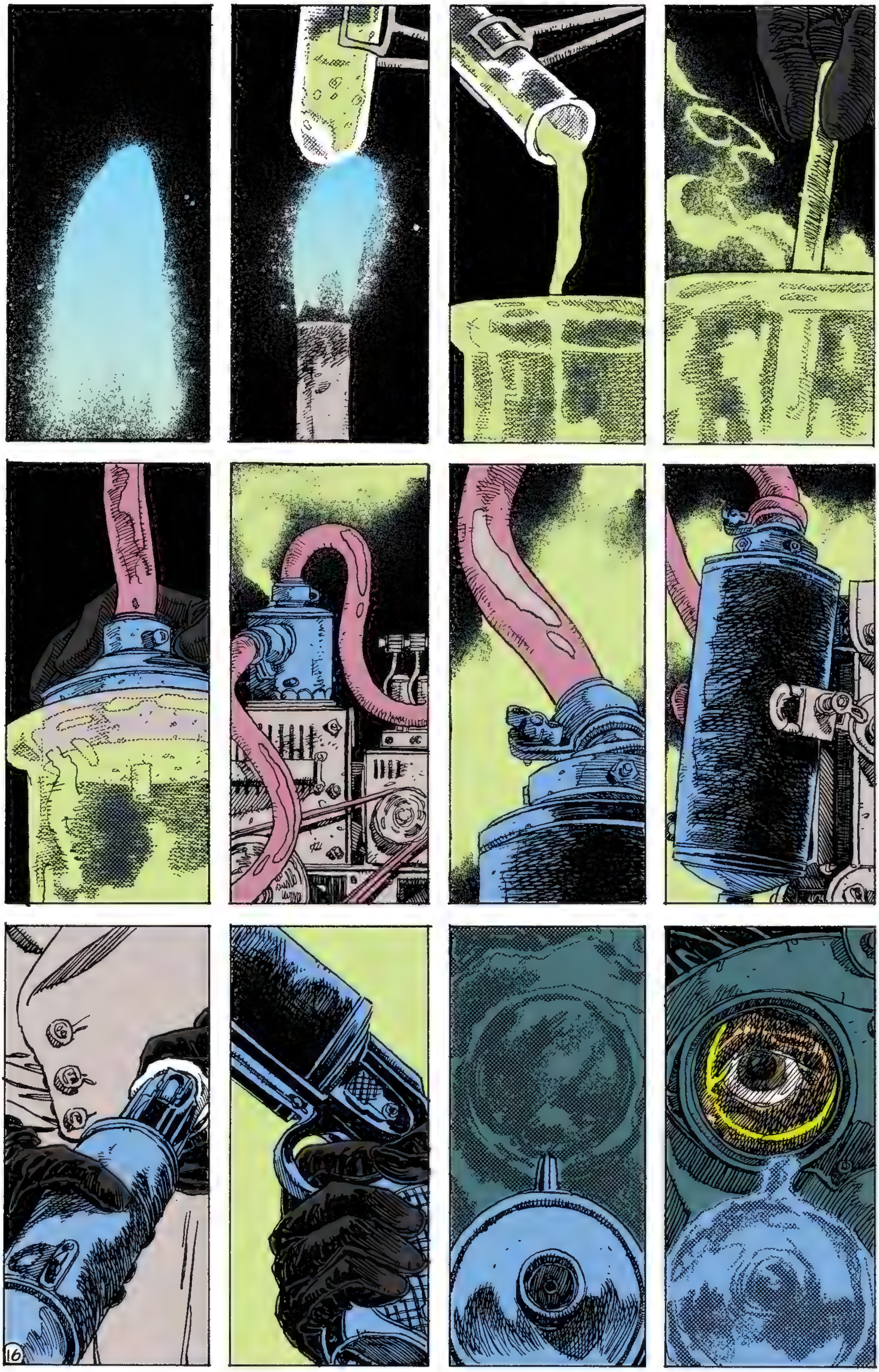
MONEY, IT SEEMS. IT'S BEING KEPT OUT OF THE PAPERS TO AVOID PUBLIC HYSTERIA.

WELL, JUST WHO *IS* HE? AND WHAT ABOUT CATHERINE?

SWEETHEART, I'M SORRY. AT THIS POINT, WE CAN'T DO MUCH OF ANYTHING. WE JUST... DON'T KNOW.

WELL, WHO THE HELL *DOES* KNOW?!!

15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GENTLEMEN, GENTLEMEN! WELCOME, WELCOME!

I HOPE YOUR FLIGHT FROM THE COAST WAS, EHHH... ENDURABLE? YES? HA! HA! HA!

SO, WELCOME TO THE GOLDMAN ESTATES. HA! HA! HA!

ALBERT GOLDMAN, THIS IS LENNY GREEN AND MOSES BERMAN.

AHHH, MR. BERMAN... A PLEASURE! YOUR FLIGHT WAS SMOOTH?

THEY DON'T LET YOU SMOKE CIGARS IN PLANES NO MORE! ONLY CIGARETTES. WHAT THE HELL'S THE WORLD COMIN' TO, I ASK YOU?

WITH GOD'S WILL... TO US, MY FRIEND. TO US. THAT'S WHAT WE'RE HERE TO DISC--

ALBERT, DARLING?

AREN'T YOU GOING TO INTRODUCE ME TO YOUR... FRIENDS.

AHHH, CELIA! GENTLEMEN, MY LOVELY DAUGHTER... CELIA.

BUT WHERE ARE YOU...?

OUT. I'M SPENDING THE NIGHT IN TOWN.

NO NEED TO WAIT UP OR WORRY, DARLING. I'LL BE JUST FINE.

BOYS...

EVENING, MISS.

WELL, ER... THIS WAY, GENTLEMEN. WE WILL *RELAX* IN MY STUDY.

EH--?

CLIC

HIYA, POPS.

ROGER! WHY MUST YOU SIT AROUND DRINKING IN THE DARK?!

WE, UMM, NEED TO USE THIS ROOM NOW, IF YOU PLEASE.

YEAH. SURE.

EHH, MY APOLOGIES, GENTLEMEN. MY SON HAS RECENTLY COME BACK HOME TO LIVE AND...WELL, TWO GROWN CHILDREN LIVING AT HOME...

NEED I SAY MORE?

SO THEN, AS YOU KNOW, I'M INTERESTED IN FINANCING SEVERAL PRODUCTIONS WITH YOUR STUDIO.

BUT THIS NEEDS TO BE DONE, SHALL WE SAY... ANONY-MOUSLY.

18

WONDERFUL, GENTLEMEN. WONDERFUL. I'M GLAD WE COULD AGREE SO QUICKLY--

ALBERT... =HIC=

YOU DIDN'T TE-- TELL ME WE HAD GUESTS...

JUST SOME ASSOCIATES FROM... JERSEY, DEAR. GENTLEMEN, MY WIFE, MIRIAM.

I MEAN, A WOMAN SHOULD GREET VIZ'TORS IN HER HOM--UTT!

THAT'S OKAY, MA'AM. WE WAS JUST LEAVIN'.

Y-YOUR FRIENDS LOOK LIKE NO ONE *I'VE* EVER KNOWN FROM JERSEY... =HIC=

HEY, ASSHOLE! WHAT AM I PAYIN' YOU FOR? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO PICK US UP AT THE DOOR!

HEY!

THESE GUYS ARE ALL *ASLEEP!*

DIAN, NO!

NOT AGAIN, TONIGHT!

DADDY... I'M DISTRAUGHT.

I NEED TO BE WITH MY FRIENDS AT A TIME LIKE THIS.

LOOK, I'VE GOT A POLICE WHISTLE AS WELL AS MY POCKET TORCH.

AND BESIDES, IT SEEMS HE'S FOUND HIS VICTIM ALREADY!

DIAN, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! I THINK HE'S BEEN HERE-- IN OUR HOUSE!

BZZ BZZ

WHAT?! WHEN?! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?!

I DIDN'T... I DIDN'T WANT TO FRIGHTEN YOU, BUT WE ARE UNDER PROTECTIVE SURVEIL-LANCE.

BZZ BZZ

NOW, SHHHH...

HELLO.

I HOPE I HAVEN'T CHOSEN A BAD TIME TO TAKE YOU UP ON THAT INVITATION?

WESLEY! NO, NOT AT ALL! NOT AT ALL!

WE WERE JUST DECIDING HOW TO SPEND SUCH A SPLENDID EVENING AT HOME.

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, DIAN?

YES, DADDY.

OF COURSE.

20

CARE FOR A COCKTAIL, WESLEY?

NO THANK YOU. I DON'T LIKE TO DRINK.

HOW STRANGE.

WELL, *PERSONALLY*, I DON'T LIKE TO SUPPORT THE PRACTICE BUT... IT *IS* A LEGAL FACT OF LIFE NOW, AFTER ALL.

MUCH TO THE DISMAY OF THE MOB. WHAT WILL MEN LIKE ALBERT GOLDMAN DO WITHOUT ILLEGAL BOOZE?

WHU--?! HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT *THAT* EX-BOOTLEGGER?!

FATHER HAD SOME DEALINGS WITH HIM BEFORE THE WAR. IS HE LEGIT NOW?

BRRNG BRRNG

WELLLL, THAT TYPE ALWAYS SEEM TO HAVE THEIR HANDS IN *SOMETHING* DIRTY.

OH! YOU'LL EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT?

CERTAINLY, SIR.

BRRNG BRRNG

SO, UH... DIAN, HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS AND NIGHTS IN MANHATTAN?

MAINLY IDLE. BUT *YOU* SEEM TO KEEP QUITE BUSY, MR. DODDS.

WES.

REGRETFULLY SO. REALLY, I HAVE LITTLE DESIRE TO INVOLVE MYSELF IN THE BUSINESS WORLD.

BUT MY FATHER LEFT NO ONE IN CHARGE WHEN HE DIED.

MMM, THAT'S TOO BAD.

WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE FOLDING?

ORIGAMI.

IT'S A JAPANESE CRAFT. I SPENT MUCH OF MY YOUTH IN THE ORIENT.

21

REALLY? WHY, THAT'S FASCINA-- DADDY, WHAT IS IT?! WHAT'S WRONG?

MORE... BAD NEWS, I'M AFRAID.

I WAS RIGHT. I SEE THIS REALLY ISN'T A GOOD TIME. PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGIES AND GOOD EVENING TO YOU BOTH.

YES, WESLEY. THANK YOU... I'M, UH, SORRY...

GOOD-BYE, MIST-- WES.

NOW, DADDY, *WHAT* IS IT?! SOMETHING ABOUT CATHERINE?!

NO... WELL, YES. SWEETHEART, I'M AFRAID THE TARANTULA HAS CLAIMED ANOTHER VICTIM!

MY FATHER USED TO SAY THAT DEATH WAS INEVITABLE, BUT THAT IMMEDIATE PERSONAL SAFETY COULD BE BOUGHT.

TYPICALLY, HIS FURIOUS ZEAL ONLY BLINDED HIM TO THE OBVIOUS.

TRAGEDY CARES NOTHING ABOUT BANK ACCOUNTS.

THOMAS! WHAT A SURPRISE!

SORRY TO DROP BY SO LATE, M'BOY, BUT YOU SEEMED SO INTERESTED THE OTHER NIGHT...

THAT BLOODY KIDNAPPER HAS STRUCK AGAIN! TWO CAPTIVES!

CARE TO TAG ALONG TO THE PRECINCT?

(YAAAWN)

SORRY, THOMAS, TOO LATE FOR ME. BUT DO KEEP ME INFORMED. IT *IS* ALL VERY INTERESTING.

--HMMMPH! YES, I'M SURE THE VICTIMS *FAMILIES* FIND IT SO AS WELL!

22

SOLLY, TAKE OUT DAT TRASH! SOLLY, TAKE OUT DAT TRASH!

I DON'T MIND WASHIN' DISHES...

BUT-- JEEZUS-- I HATE DI'STINKIN' TRASH!

PLIQ

EH...?

A--

AAAHHHH!

EVENIN', JUDGE.

HI, PASCAL. WHY ALL THE PRESS? I THOUGHT THIS WAS "HUSH"?

AHH, COULDN'T KEEP 'EM *BOTH* QUIET. SOMEBODY SQUEALED AND NOW IT'S A GODDAMN ZOO OUT DERE!

DIAN! WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?!

JUDGE SCHAFFER! THANK GOD YOU'RE HERE! I WAS AT HOME WHEN FATHER HEARD AND I *INSISTED* ON COMING ALONG.

HE'S IN THERE NOW WITH THE COMMISSIONER AND SEVERAL FEDS!

I WAS ALL ALONE HERE 'TIL YOU SHOWED UP.

YES, AND YOU UH... SEEM TO BE QUITE THE CENTER OF ATTENTION.

I KNOW.

WELL, THE POLICE ARE A FRATERNITY. I DON'T THINK THEY'RE USED TO SEEING MANY WOMEN AT THIS PRECIN--

YIII!

OH! I'M SO SORRY, MISS. HERE, LET ME...

I CAN MANAGE BY MYSELF, THANK YOU.

NO! NO, THAT'S FINE...

LADIES

OHHH, THE LIGHT'S BURNED OUT.

THEY REALLY *DON'T* GET MANY WOMEN DOWN HERE.

LUCKILY...

CLIC

25

DC
VERTIGO

no. 2
MAY 93

SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

"...his terrible wet eyes stared out of the mask, reflecting the spatters of blood..."

by Matt Wagner
& Guy Davis

FOR MATURE READERS • MATURE READERS

THE SECOND NOTE READS, "THE TARANTULA HAS STRUCK AGAIN." NO NEW DEMANDS.

AND THIS GIRL'S FAMILY IS WEALTHY, BUT NOT LIKE THE VAN DER MEERS.

SO WHAT'S THE POINT?

PRESSURE.

YOU GOT IT, BURKE.

RIGHT. NOW HE'S GOT LATITUDE.

IF HE KILLS ONE OF THEM, THE OTHER FAMILY'S LIKELY TO GIVE IN.

GODDAMN CRAZY BASTARD.

COMMISSIONER DAVIS, I SUSPECT THIS IS GOING TO REQUIRE QUITE A BIT OF MAN POWER.

I'VE ALREADY AUTHORIZED UP TO TWO THOUSAND OVER-TIME HOURS FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS.

LET'S PRAY THIS IS OVER BY THEN.

ROSS, YOU AND LIEUTENANT BURKE, HERE, ARE HEADING THE WHOLE OPERATION?

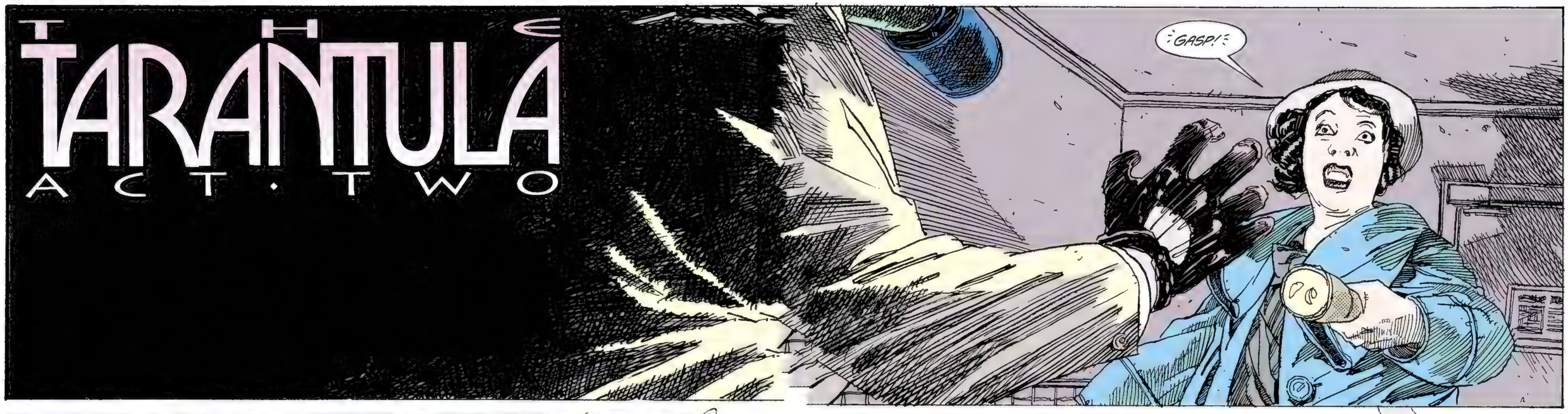
RIGHT. BURKE IS ONE OF MY BEST.

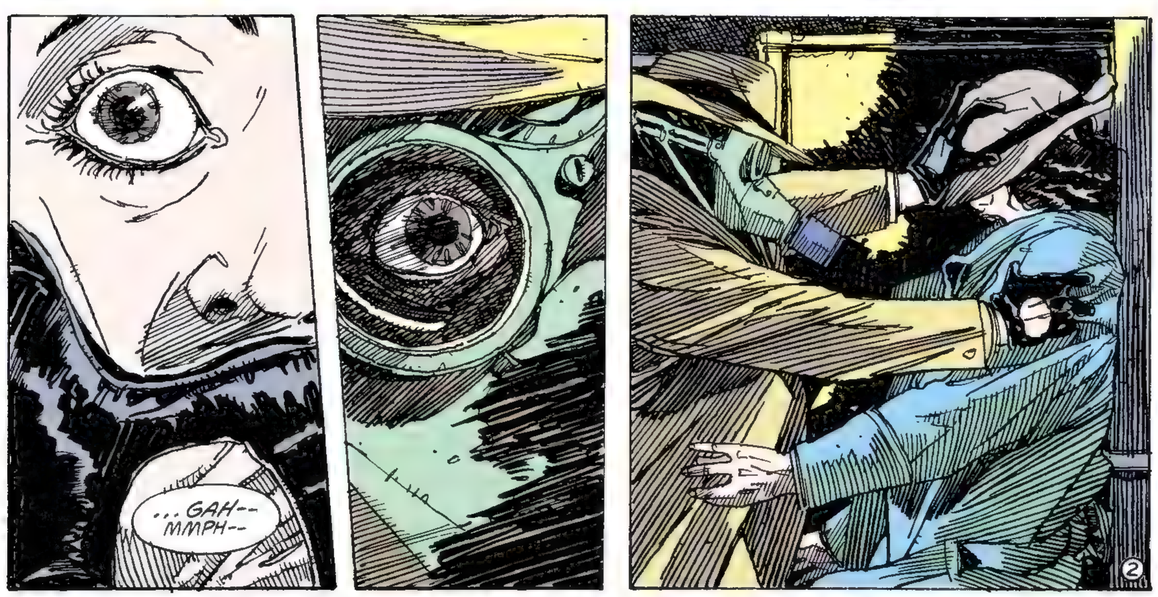
AND WE'VE DOUBLED PATROL ROUTES FROM HARLEM ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE BATTERY.

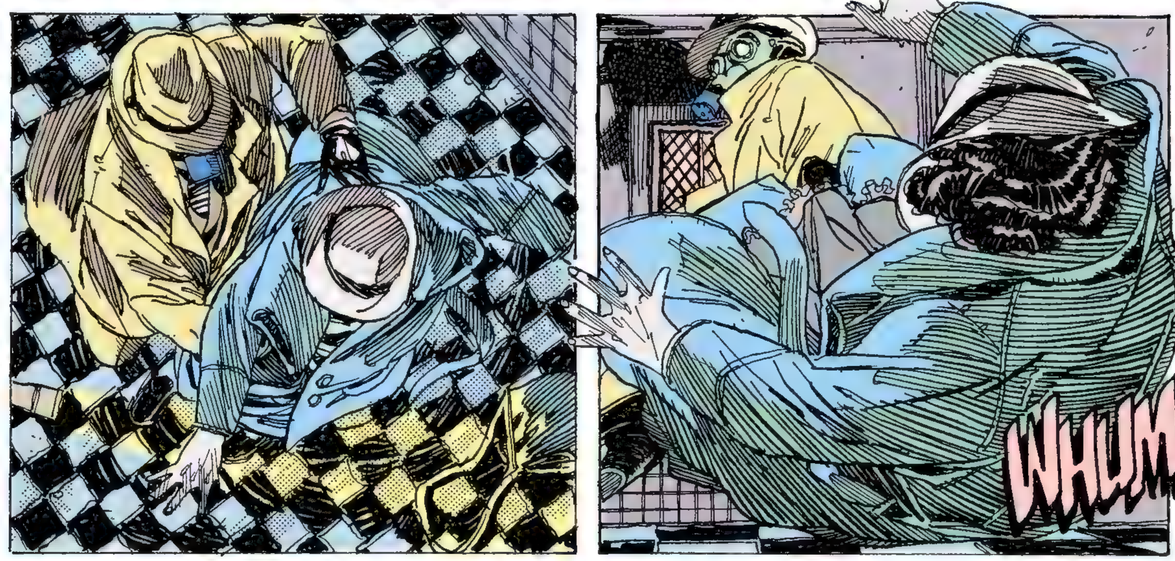
GOOD. WE DON'T WANT TO START A PANIC BUT WE'VE GOT TO BE READY.

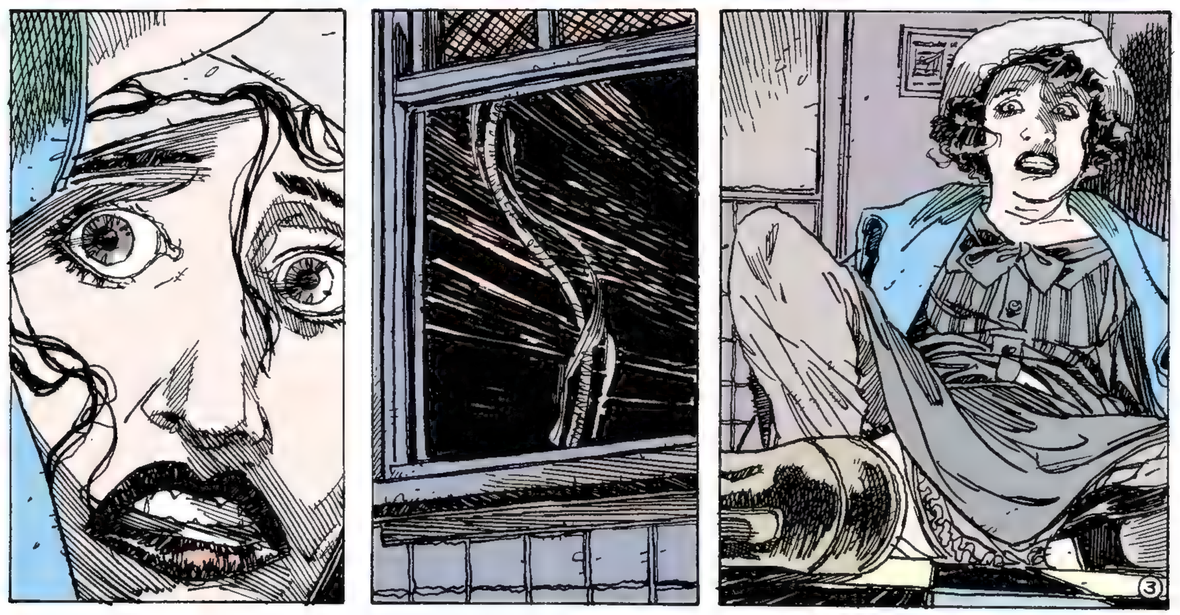
WHO KNOWS WHERE THIS BASTARD'LL SHOW UP AGAIN?

THE TARANTULA
ACT·TWO









D...D...

DADDY...?

DADDY...?

...AND WE'VE GOT TO GET WORD TO THE VAN DER MEERS. THEY'VE BEEN IN SECLUSION SINCE THIS BEGAN--EH? OH, DIAN...

COME WITH ME, DEAREST. YOU...DON'T WANT TO SEE THIS.

BELMONT, WHAT IS IT? YOU'RE WHITE AS A GHOST.

A...A WOMAN'S BODY HAS BEEN FOUND. THEY JUST BROUGHT IT IN.

WE'RE...AH, *REASONABLY* SURE IT'S NOT CATHERINE, BUT WE CAN'T BE POSITIVE.

THE BODY... SHE'S...TERRIBLY MUTILATED.

IT'S JUST... HORRIBLE--

...D-DAMN IT ALLLL--

OH!

OHHHH...

DIAN!!

DIAN...

DIAN.

DIAN! HERE, SIT UP SLOWLY--

I'M FINE, YOU TWO. DON'T MAKE SUCH A FUSS. I'M EMBARRASSED ENOUGH. WHAT A *DISGUSTING* TRIP TO THE LAND OF SWOONING FEMALES!

DIAN... WE WERE *WORRIED*, THAT'S ALL.

I *KNOW*! I'M... I'M SORRY.

HERE, MY DEAR. SIP SLOWLY AT THIS BRANDY. I KNOW THIS NEWS IS JUST DREAD-FUL.

THANK YOU, JUDGE SCHAFFER. NO, IT ISN'T *THAT*.

I SAW HIM -- THE KIDNAPPER -- *HERE*, IN THE LADIES' ROOM. HE WAS SPYING ON YOUR MEETING AND HE... WORE SOME SORT OF MASK.

HE'S GONE NOW.

WHAT?!

I'LL ALERT ROSS O'DONALD. HAVE THEM SEARCH THE ENTIRE BUILDING.

DADDY, I... HAVE THE VAN DER MEERS ARRIVED FROM THEIR COUNTRY HOME YET?

NO, DEAR. IT'LL BE A FEW HOURS YET.

CATHERINE AND I USED TO GO TO THE WOMEN'S RACKET CLUB, OCCASIONALLY.

SHE HAD SEVERAL DISTINGUISHING MARKS ALONG HER BACK AND SHOULDERS.

DIAN, WHAT ARE YOU IMPLYING--

DADDY, *I* WANT TO IDENTIFY THE BODY. I'M SURE I COULD RECOGNIZE HER AND I WANT TO SAVE HER PARENTS FROM SUCH AN EXPERIENCE.

DADDY, PLEASE. I... I FEEL I REALLY *NEED* TO DO THIS.

5

I STILL DON'T APPROVE OF THIS IRREGULAR--

LIEUTENANT BURKE, PLEASE. FOR THE PARENTS' SAKE.

DIAN, ARE YOU *SURE* ABOUT THIS?

DADDY...LET'S JUST GET ON WITH THIS.

YOU SAID JUST THE BACK...UHH, FACE DOWN, RIGHT?

YES.

Whew. WELL, *THAT'S* GOOD. AIN'T MUCH LEFT AROUND THE EYES.

AND, CHRIST, THE HAND IS JUST G--

SHUT UP, YOU.

SHE-- SHE HAD THREE VERY DISTINCT BEAUTY MARKS ALONG HER LEFT SHOULDER BLADE.

THAT ISN'T...IT'S NOT HER...NOT CATHERINE.

THANK YOU, GENTLEMEN. COME, DIAN.

THOMAS, I NEED TO STAY HERE. COULD YOU ESCORT DIAN BACK TO OUR BROWNSTONE?

NOT HER...

CERTAINLY, BELMONT.

NOT HER...NOT... CATHERINE...

CATHHH-ERINE...

C-C-C-CATH-ERINE...

TIME TO TALK AGAIN, CATHERINE...

THAT'S A GOOD LITTLE GIRRRRL.

WH-WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I'VE TOLD YOU.

NO.

HE-HE DOESN'T *TELL* ME THOSE SORTS OF THINGS!

OHHHH, HEH HEH HEH...

YOU *KNOW* WHAT I WANT MY... *DEAR*. YOU KNOW VERY WELL WHAT I WANT.

DON'T YOU?!

NOW, WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE A LITTLE TRAMP LIKE YOU?

YOU DON'T SUPPOSE HE ACTUALLY *LOVES* YOU, *HMMM*?

NO, NO, I *KNOW* HE DOESN'T.

IT'S JUST A GOOD TIME, IS ALL. I'D *TELL* YOU IF I KNEW! I SW--

MY, MY, MY... SWEARING. TSK, TSK. YOU *ARE* JUST A LITTLE TRAMP, AREN'T YOU.

I'VE KNOWN WOMEN LIKE YOU.

AND MEN LIKE *HIM*. WELL, I LIKE TO HAVE A GOOD TIME TOO, YOU KNOW.

YOUR FELLOW CAPTIVE... *SHE* LEARNED ALL ABOUT THAT.

I GUESS WE'LL JUST HAVE TO... *HEH--CELEBRATE* ALL OVER AGAIN.

NOOOOO!!

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!

WHY WON'T YOU BELIEVE ME?!

PLEASE--

:SOB: :S :SOB:

OH, ONE MORE THING ABOUT YOUR "*FRIEND.*" BEFORE SHE FINALLY DIED...

SHE SAID TO TELL YOU HELLO.

FWAP

AAAHHHHH!

AAHHHHH!

IT'S NOT WORKING.

TH-THIS IS *MADNESS!!*

SHE DOESN'T KNOW. I BELIEVE HER. LET'S JUST GET RID OF H-

BE QUIET.

I KNOW WHAT HE'S LIKE AFTER LOVE-- CHILD-LIKE, OPEN. HE'S TOLD HER, I'M SURE.

AND STOP BEHAVING LIKE SUCH THE INNOCENT.

I KNOW YOU'RE QUITE *ENJOYING* ALL THIS.

COME ALONG, MY DEAR. WE'LL HAIL A CAB AND--WHY, IT'S...

I ONLY VAGUELY REMEMBER MY MOTHER--BEFORE THE TUBERCULOSIS TOOK HER. MY FATHER WAS STILL AT WAR WHEN IT HAPPENED. I NEVER ONCE SAW HIM ACTUALLY CRY ABOUT IT LATER.

WESLEY?!

HELLO, THOMAS.

ALTHOUGH HE WOULD OFTEN SAY THAT, WHILE THE EVILS OF LIFE ARE MANY, NONE IS MORE TRAGIC THAN THE DEATH OF A WOMAN.

WHY, M'BOY, I THOUGHT YOU... OH! YOU, AH, REMEMBER MISS BELMONT, OF COURSE?

CERTAINLY. GOOD EVENING *AGAIN*, DIAN.

HELLO, WES.

I TRIED TO GET INSIDE EARLIER, BUT COULDN'T.

I FELT I JUST HAD TO COME AFTER ALL, TOM. I--I KNOW YOU'VE ALWAYS FELT DISAPPOINTED IN *MY* FATHER AND I...

WELL, I DIDN'T WAN'T TO INHERIT THAT FROM HIM AS WELL.

AHH, M'BOY... I DON'T BELIEVE YOU HAVE.

BUT NOW... I WAS JUST ABOUT TO ESCORT DIAN HOME.

PLEASE, ALLOW ME TO TAKE YOU BOTH. MY CAR IS RIGHT HERE.

SOOO, WHAT'S THE LATEST NEWS ON THIS... WHAT IS IT--THE *SPIDER*?

10

HORRIBLE! SIMPLY TERRIBLE! I TELL YOU, WESLEY, IF I WAS STILL AN ACTIVE OFFICER OF THE COURT--

...BUTCHERED, THEY CLAIM!

WHA-? OH! I GUESS MY STOP IS FIRST.

BUT, DIAN, I PROMISED YOUR FATHER.

NONSENSE, YOU DEAR MAN. I CAN MANAGE ON MY OWN. THANK YOU.

GOOD NIGHT TO YOU BOTH. DIAN, TELL YOUR FATHER I'LL RING HIM TOMORROW.

HMPH. YES, WELL... THANKS FOR THE LIFT, WESLEY.

I WILL. GOOD NIGHT, JUDGE.

WES? ARE YOU... ALL RIGHT?

YES, I'M...

...IT'S JUST THAT-- GIRL...

SHE... IT'S ALL JUST SO...

...PAINFUL. I...

I...I'M SORRY, DIAN. I DON'T MEAN TO MAKE SUCH A SCENE. I KNOW BIG BOYS AREN'T *SUPPOSED* TO CRY.

NO. WELL...

THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY, ISN'T IT?

11

CARLO, DARLING...

...WE SIMPLY *MUST* GET YOU SOME NEW SHOES NEXT TIME I'M IN TOWN.

I DON'T WANT PEOPLE SAYING CELIA GOLDMAN IS SATISFIED WITH ANY LESS THAN THE BEST.

NO WAY, BABY. YOU GOT ALL THE GROCERIES, I TELL YOU.

CLASS A AND *THEN* SOME!

HEH. YOU'RE CUTE.

BUT NOW, COME ON.

TIME FOR YOU TO LEAVE.

SURE, BABY. WHEN'LL I SEE YOU AGAIN?

I MEAN, MY RENT IS COMING DUE AND ALL...

WHEN I'M READY, I'LL CALL YOU. UNTIL *THEN*, DARLING...

HA. YOU *ARE* COOL AS A COCKTAIL SHAKER, DOLL.

OKAY. YOU WIN. AS ALWAYS.

CIAO, BABY.

CELIA...

12

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I ASKED YOU NOT TO BRING YOUR... GIGOLOS AROUND THE HOUSE?

OH, PUH-LEAZE, DADDY... CARLO'S JUST A BOY FRIEND. IT'S NOTHING.

AND WHAT ABOUT THOSE VISITORS YOU HAD JUST A FEW NIGHTS AGO?

WHAT ABOUT THEM?

I HAVEN'T SEEN SO MANY BULGING ARMPITS IN YEARS.

THEY WERE JUST... THAT IS... I-I JUST DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU GET HURT, IS ALL. THAT TYPE IS ALWAYS AFTER SOMETHING. HE'S A GOLD-DIGGER.

TSK. YOU'RE SUCH A DEAR.

I KNOW HOW TO HANDLE CARLO. LIKE I SAID, HE'S NOTHING--LESS THAN NOTHING.

AND BESIDES...

YOU KNOW I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU.

OHHH, I'M SORRY, SWEETHEART. I CAN'T HELP BEING OVER-PROTECTIVE, YOU KNOW. YOU *ARE* MY SPECIAL LITTLE GIRL, AFTER ALL.

NOT SO LITTLE, I THINK, DARLING.

BUT, COME. YOUR MOTHER-- SHE TELLS ME THE SERVANTS HAVE DINNER READY, A FAMILY MEAL, YES?

MOTHER? BUT IT'S ALL OF FIVE-THIRTY.

YOU MEAN TO SAY SHE'S STILL *UP*?

NOW, CELIA... LET'S SIT DOWN.

I TELL YOU, ROGER, IF YOU'RE EVER GOING TO SPRING BACK INTO THIS WORLD YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE LIFE BY THE BALLS.

PARDON THE FRENCH.

YEAH, POP...

I'M NOT SAYING YOU *WON'T* EVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING...

...BUT YOU CERTAINLY WON'T FIND A SECOND CHANCE IN THE BOTTOM OF THAT BOTTLE.

YEAH, POP. RIGHT, POP.

DIAN?!

NO EVENING DRESS? NO ARGUMENTS?

DON'T TELL ME YOU ACTUALLY PLAN ON STAYING *HOME* THIS EVENING?

YES, DADDY.

NO PARTIES. NO CLUBS. IT'S JUST ME AND HEMINGWAY TONIGHT.

WELL, *I'VE* GOT TO GO INTO THE OFFICE. THERE'S AN OFFICER ON THE CORNER IF ANYTHING--

I'M SURE I'LL BE FINE, DADDY.

RING RING

DIAN BELMONT?

I'LL TAKE IT, THANK YOU.

EH? NOW, WHO COULD *THAT* BE?

COURIER SERVICE FOR YOU, MY DEAR.

15

FROM ONE OF YOUR MANY ADMIRERS?

OH, DADDY...IT'S PROBABLY AN OVER-DUE NOTICE ON THIS LIBRARY BOOK.

WELL, GOOD NIGHT, SWEETHEART. DON'T WAIT UP FOR *ME* FOR A CHANGE.

NIGHT, DADDY.

BUT, WHY WOULD THE LIBRARY USE A *COURIER*--OH!

IT'S FROM WESLEY...

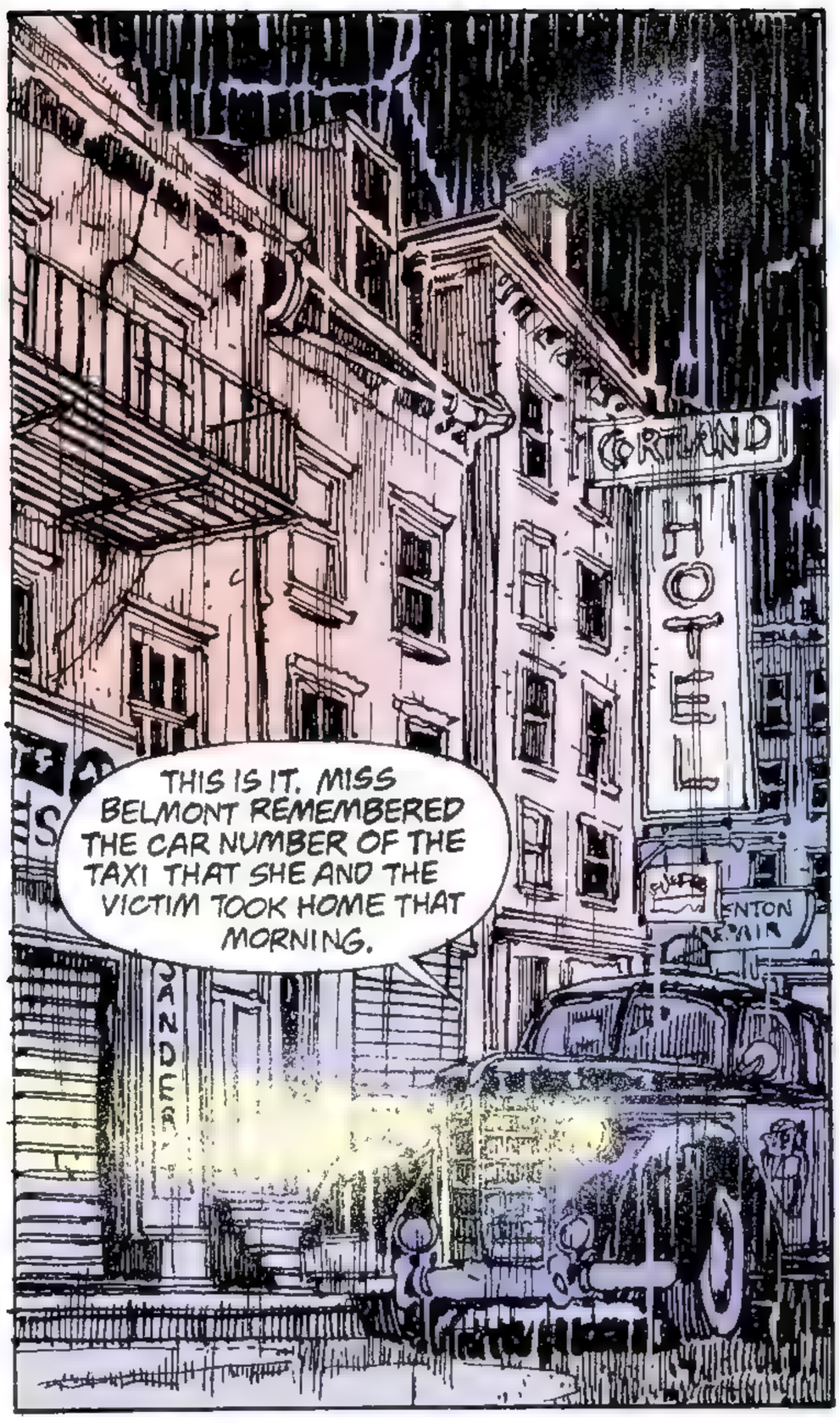
Dear Dian,

I'm writing to apologize for my behavior of last night. I understand a dear friend of yours was involved in all this mess and I should have shown more care for the obvious distress this must be causing you. Instead, I let my own emotions over the sufferings of a stranger interfere with my responsibility towards those of a friend.

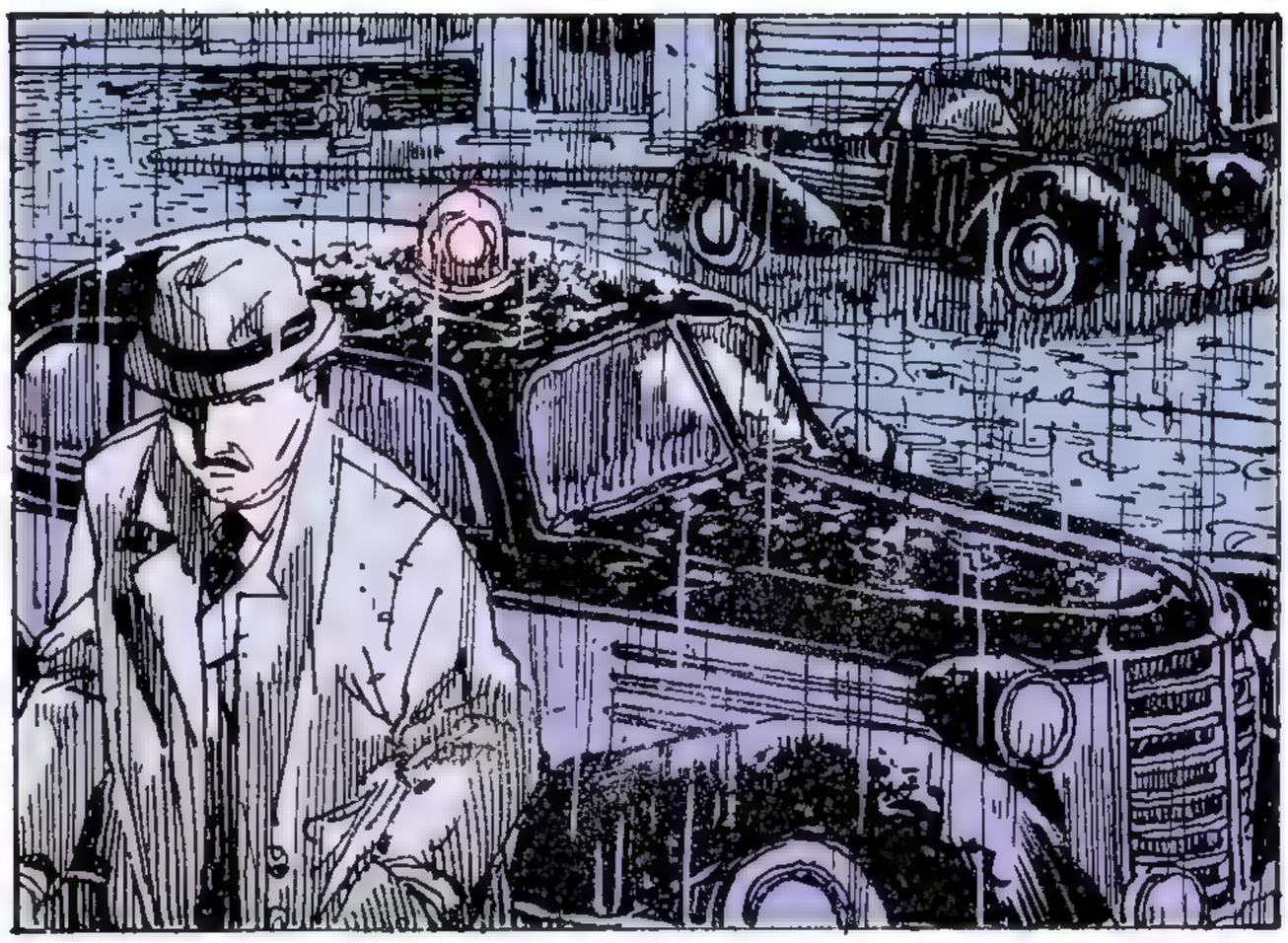
By way of repentance, I can only offer you these belated words of courage. The human spirit is a vast and powerful thing. So long as any chance for your friend's safety endures, cling to it with all the memory of your times spent together. Hope is the well-spring of life itself, Dian, and we all nurture that fact in our own special manner. Don't ever let go of that.

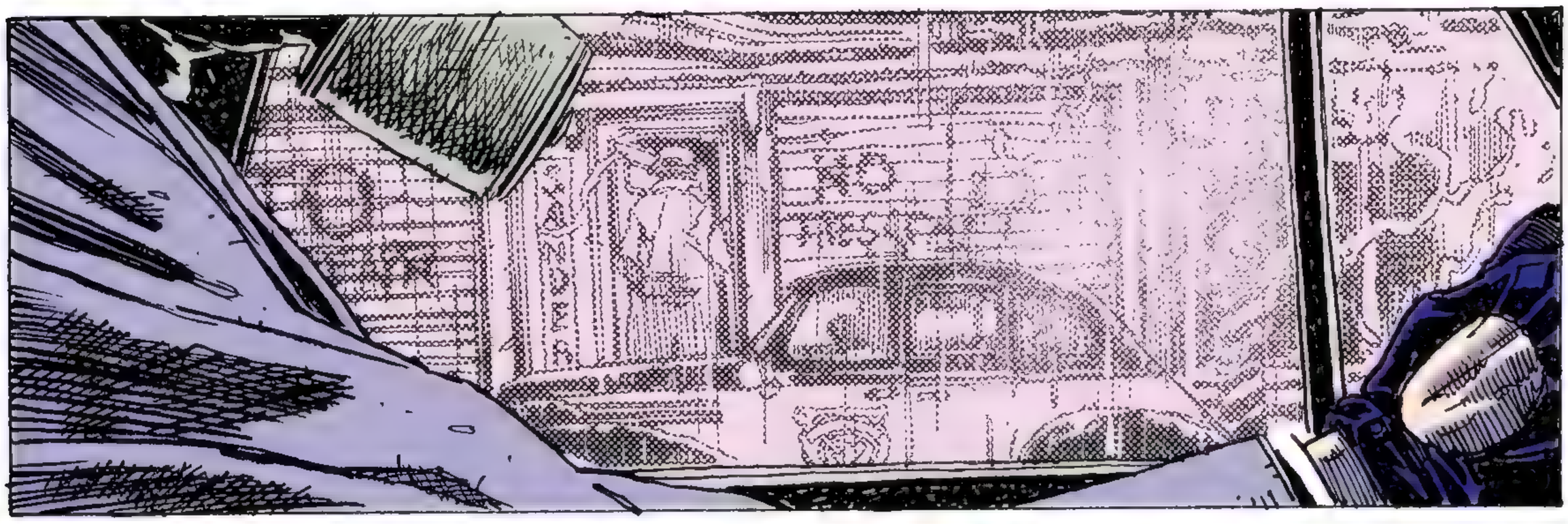
Here if you should ever need me,

Wesley Dodds.


CORTLAND
HOTEL
CANDEE
THIS IS IT. MISS BELMONT REMEMBERED THE CAR NUMBER OF THE TAXI THAT SHE AND THE VICTIM TOOK HOME THAT MORNING.

THE DRIVER LIVES UPSTAIRS.
BUT I DON'T WANNA TAKE A CHANCE SCARIN' THIS BIRD'S MEMORY AWAY. YOU WAIT HERE.
SURE, LIEUTENANT.





CLANG CLAG
EH?
THE FIRE ESCAPE?
17

ALL RIGHT, WHO'S OUT TH--

AAACKH--

UNH!

SMAC

CLAC

CLAC

KNOCK KNOC-

HUH?

HOO IZIT?

POLICE. OPEN UP!

WUDDU-YA-WAN?

CRAC!

HUC--

I KNOW YOU CAN STILL HEAR ME. OPEN YOUR EYES.

YUH-YESSS...

IS YOUR NAME CHARLIE MALLOY?

Y-YESSS...

I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU, CHARLIE, AND I KNOW YOU'LL ANSWER... TRUTHFULLY.

UNNHH...

WHO TH' HELL WAS...? SOME SORT'O... GAS--

ALL RIGHT, HOLD 'EM HIGH--

HUH?

WHAT THE HELL *IS* THIS SHIT?

19

DIAN BELMONT DESCRIBES HERSELF AS IDLE -- RATHER LIKE A HIGH-POWERED MOTOR IN NEUTRAL. FOR SHE WAS SOON TO DEVELOP THE MOST TENACIOUS HABIT OF INVADING MY LIFE.

THIS IS IT, MISS. THE ALGONQUIN.

THANK YOU, DRIVER.

MR. WESLEY DODDS?

THIS WAY, MADAM.

WESLEY, I-I HOPE I'M NOT INTRUDING?

DIAN?!

I STOPPED BY YOUR HOUSE FIRST AND YOUR BUTLER TOLD ME I COULD PROBABLY FIND YOU HERE.

AHHH-- IN SOME WAYS, HE KNOWS *ME TOO* WELL.

BUT, THIS *IS* QUITE A PLEASANT SURPRISE.

I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANKS FOR YOUR LOVELY LETTER. YOU NEEDN'T HAVE GONE TO SUCH EFFORT.

NONSENSE. I WAS AN INSENSITIVE BOOB THE OTHER NIGHT, AND... WELL, WRITING'S ALWAYS BEEN A JOY FOR ME.

YES, THIS *IS* QUITE THE LITERARY HANG-OUT, SUPPOSEDLY. I FEEL A BIT INTIMIDATED, I MUST SAY.

YOU'VE NEVER *BEEN* HERE BEFORE?

20

I COME HERE QUITE OFTEN MYSELF. DOROTHY PARKER, E.B. WHITE, JAMES THURBER-- I FIND GREAT COMFORT AND INSPIRATION SIMPLY BEING IN THE PRESENCE OF SUCH BRILLIANCE.

REALLY?

WELL, THEN WHY DID YOU NEVER PURSUE WRITING AS A CAREER? SURELY YOUR INHERITANCE HAS LEFT YOU THE LUXURY TO DO SO. I MEAN, I *SAW* THAT HOUSE OF YOURS...

SUCH FORTUNES MUST BE MAINTAINED SOMEHOW, DIAN. MY FATHER'S DEATH WAS... SHALL WE SAY, *ILL-TIMED*, SO FAR AS MY ASPIRATIONS TOWARDS THE PEN WERE CONCERNED.

HOW SAD

BUT THEN I PROBABLY WOULDN'T BE THE LUCKY RECIPIENT OF YOUR TALENTS.

TRUE.

AND I PROBABLY WOULD'VE ENDED UP AS A POMPOUS BOOR FOR WHOM WRITING WAS MORE OF A TASK.

NO FUN AT THE DODDS HOUSE.

AS AFTERNOON STRETCHED INTO EARLY EVENING, I WAS MORE AND MORE SADDENED BY THE FATE OF WOMEN IN THIS WORLD. HERE WAS A VIBRANT, INTELLIGENT PERSON FOR WHOM NO IMMEDIATE AVENUES HAD OPENED. HOW UNLIKE MEN, WHO ARE USUALLY NURTURED TOWARDS A LIFELONG AMBITION FROM THEIR EARLIEST CHILDHOOD.

OH, I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT EVER BEING TRUE.

21

IF ONLY I COULD HAVE TOLD HER THE TRUTH--THAT IT WASN'T THE HOLLOW NEED FOR WEALTH THAT HAD DERAILED MY LIFE IN THE ARTS...

BUT RATHER MY HYPER-SENSITIVE VIEW OF A WORLD FILLED WITH GREED, ANGER, BRUTALITY AND HATE.

THE LOWEST, UGLIEST FACETS OF LIFE.

ASPECTS I JUST CAN'T IGNORE.

DANCE

TAL OR S

ASPECTS I CAN NEVER ESCAPE. EVEN IN MY DREAMS.

22

GODDAMN IT, ANOTHER ONE! ANOTHER NUT-CASE WITH A HABIT FOR SIGNING HIS HANDIWORK!

"A SPIDER WILL PREY, ITS WEB TAUT WITH SCHEMES BUT CANNOT ESCAPE THE SANDMAN'S DARK DREAM."

JEEE-ZUS!

YOU GET ANYTHING MORE OUTTA THE CABBIE?

NO! JUST THAT BULLSHIT ABOUT A MILK TRUCK AND THE SUN COMIN' UP! DIDN'T YOU EVEN READ MY GODDAMN REPORT?!

OH, I READ YOUR REPORT ALL-RIGHT, SMART GUY.

AN' I THINK *YOU* AIN'T BEEN DOIN' YOUR HOME-WORK.

WHAT?!

THAT'S A LOAD OF SHIT!! THERE IS NOTHING TO GO ON IN HERE!

NOTHING!!

YOU FINISHED?

THE CABBIE SAID IT WAS AN *EVERGOOD* MILK TRUCK. AND EVERGOOD MILK WENT OUTTA BUSINESS OVER THREE YEARS AGO.

I THINK I'LL JUST SEND A SQUAD CAR OVER TO THEIR OLD WAREHOUSE.

OH, NO YOU DON'T. THIS ONE IS MINE. YOU CAN *BET* THIS ONE IS MINE.

23

MUCH LATER, I SLEEP.

AND, AS ALWAYS, I DREAM.

AGAIN, THERE IS THE WOMAN.

SHE IS STRONG BUT ALONE. DETERMINED...

...BUT FRIGHTENED. YET SHE KNOWS SHE MUST CONFRONT THIS FEAR.

RESOLUTE, SHE TURNS STARING INTO THE FACE OF OBLIVION.

DEFIANT SHE STANDS, BUT SHE CAN NO LONGER MAINTAIN HER FORM OR HER SELF. SOON SHE IS SHATTERED LIKE THE CRYSTAL SPIRES OF A SNOWFLAKE.

THE PARTICLES SETTLE ON A RIVER OF BROKEN DREAMS.

REVELERS DROWN IN THE ILLUSION OF A HAPPY WORLD.

THEIR BLOATED BODIES FINALLY BURST, LIKE THE GUTS OF AN OVERFED LEECH.

INNOCENCE IS DYING IN THIS SICK AND LONELY WORLD. INNOCENCE IS ALL THAT'S PROMISED IN THE NEXT.

24

I...

I JUST DON'T EVEN CARE ANY MORE.

OH REALLY, NOW?

MY, MY, MY...

LET'S JUST SEE WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT THAT.

SHALL WE?

IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME, THEN **DO IT**, YOU BASTARD!

KILL *YOU*?!

OH

NO

NO

NO

OH MY, MY, NO. THAT'S NOT WHAT I HAD IN MIND AT ALL.

NOOOO!!

I WAS THINKING MORE ON THE LINES OF AN *ENCORE* PERFORMANCE!

"...murmuring cold, heartless
invitations, she wet
her lips...daring him
to ever say no."

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

by Matt Wagner & Guy Davis

GAVIN WILSON

16
15
Everglood
MILK COMPANY
LOTS A-D
KE
OU
CONDE
PRO
EVE
M
WAREH
MANAGER
CRAC

THE TARANTULA
ACT·THREE

Evergood MIL

FREEZE IT, ASSHOLE!!

NOW...

ON YOUR FEET. NICE AND SLOW.

ALL RIGHT. THAT'S ENOU--

BZZT BZT

EH?!

WHAT TH--?!

BZZZZ

CRICH

SHIT!

2

PAW

AHH!

PAW

YOU

BASTARD!!

CLUD

AAHCK--

FOOOSH

3

;YAWN;

HUMPHRIES, YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO WAIT UP FOR ME. I *TOLD* YOU I'D BE LATE--

YES, SIR, BUT IT SEEMS YOU HAVE A VISITOR.

AT *THIS* HOUR?! WHY, IT'S NEARLY THREE *A.M.* WHO--?

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, I HAVE HAD BOUTS OF INSOMNIA. SLEEP, WHEN IT DOES COME, IS RARELY PEACEFUL AS A TERRIBLE EMPTINESS SEEMS TO PULL AT MY MIND, BECKONING ME.

OH! DIAN--IT'S *YOU!*

HERE.

I FEEL RATHER SILLY AND MORE THAN A LITTLE RUDE SHOWING UP THIS LATE, WES, BUT THE LIGHTS WERE ON SO I STOPPED AND... AND THEN I WASN'T GOING TO WAIT, BUT...

NO, NO--THAT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT.

FATHER'S BUSINESS HAS TURNED ME INTO A BIT OF A NIGHT OWL AS WELL, I'M AFRAID I SEEM TO GET FAR MORE ACCOMPLISHED WHEN THERE'S NO ONE AROUND.

SO... WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM, DIAN?

AM I *THAT* OBVIOUS?

IT *IS* THREE A.M.

;*sigh*; YES, IT IS.

IT--IT'S THIS BUSINESS WITH MY FRIEND WHO'S BEEN ABDUCTED.

I FEEL I'M BECOMING... *OBSESSED* WITH THE SITUATION. I *MEAN*, I FEEL SO POWERLESS TO AFFECT ANYTHING ABOUT IT, TO *HELP* HER.

TELL ME, WESLEY, DO YOU DREAM VERY OFTEN?

DOESN'T EVERYONE?

I DON'T. OCCASIONALLY, BUT NOT OFTEN.

SOME WOULD CALL YOU LUCKY.

AM I?

MAYBE. BUT THE POINT IS, *MY* TROUBLED NIGHTS-- LIKE TONIGHT-- ARE STILL CALM, PEACEFUL. I--I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE WHAT CATHERINE'S GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW.

I... I SAW THE OTHER GIRL, YOU KNOW.

STEADY...

IT'S NATURAL TO FEEL HELPLESS, DIAN. AND, YOU *ARE* ON THE INSIDE OF ALL THIS. BUT, I SUPPOSE YOUR FATHER AND THE POLICE...

ARE DOING ALL THEY CAN. I *KNOW*.

I KNOW.

STILL, I CAN'T HELP FEELING A TRIFLE... INADEQUATE. BUT, NOW... I'VE TAKEN UP ENOUGH OF YOUR VERY LATE EVENING. THANK YOU SO MUCH, WES.

WELL, YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY LONGER. I DON'T FEEL THAT I'VE REALLY BEEN MUCH HELP...

NO, YOU WERE PERFECT. I THINK I JUST NEEDED TO SAY SOME OF THAT OUT LOUD. THANKS AGAIN.

BESIDES, I CAN TELL YOU'RE EXHAUSTED.

OR DO YOU *ALWAYS* WEAR YOUR HAT AROUND INSIDE YOUR OWN HOUSE?

WHAT?

OH. *HA!* NO, YOU'RE RIGHT. JUST WHEN I'M TOO BLOODY TIRED TO REMEMBER IT.

GOOD NIGHT, DIAN.

OR WHEN I'M JUST PLAIN TOO BLOODY.

5

DEAR GOD, THIS IS MADNESS!! JESUS, THE SCREAMING... HER EYE--

ENOUGH.

BUT YOU DIDN'T SEE IT! SWEET JESUS, HER EYE-- IT...

ENOUGH.

WE WILL WAIT TILL OUR LITTLE SHIKSA AWAKENS. AND THEN WE WILL TRY AGAIN.

THE OTHERS ARE UNIMPORTANT.

EASY FOR YOU TO SAY. YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOOK AT THEM.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEE ANY EYES EXPLODE!

THE TONGUES GO ALL PURPLE AND FAT... YOU DON'T HAVE TO HEAR THEM SCREAMING!!

I HEAR THEM.

AND I ALSO HEAR YOU. HISSING AS YOU BEAT THEM.

TRYING TO HIDE YOUR SHIVERING LUST. YOU ALWAYS WERE SUCH A GELDED LITTLE PUPPY.

CRY IF YOU WANT, HYPOCRITE...

BUT I WILL **NOT** LEAVE THIS UNFINISHED!

YESSS, MOSES. YES.

I'M GLAD WE'RE SO CLOSE TO FINISHING THIS DEAL. YES, AND WE ARE CLEAR ON THIS? OWNERSHIP WILL BE PLACED UNDER MY DAUGHTER'S NAME?

WONDERFUL!

AND GOOD HEALTH TO YOU TOO, MY FRIEND.

CLAC-

SAMMY, COME AND GET ME.

NO, NOT IN A MINUTE. *NOW!* I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS GODDAMN HOUSE TONIGHT.

HEY! STOP AND PICK UP MISS VAN DER MEER --UHH? OY, YOU'RE RIGHT. FORGOT ABOUT THAT MESS.

WELLL, BRING SOMEONE ELSE ALONG.

I DON'T KNOW, SAMMY! HOW HARD CAN IT BE TO FIND A DECENT *WHORE* ON SHORT NOTICE?! CALL YOUR GODDAMN SISTER WHYDONCHA'?!

SLAM

JESUS *CHRIST*, WHAT DO I PAY HIM FOR?

AHHH...

DADDY...

DADDY...

YES, OF COURSE, MR. MAYOR. I'LL SPEAK TO YOU, THEN. GOOD DAY.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY, I NEED YOUR SIGNATURE ON THESE...

YES, OF COURSE. NOW THEN--DIAN--WHAT A LOVELY SURPRISE...YOU WERE SAYING?

I SAID I'VE RECON--

RING RING RING

OOP--EXCUSE ME, DEAR... YESSS, THIS ONE TOO? THERE YOU GO.

THANK YOU, SIR.

DADDY!! LISTEN TO ME!

I SAID I'VE RECONSIDERED YOUR OFFER TO TAKE A JOB HERE IN THE OFFICE. I WANT TO HELP OUT ON THIS CASE.

OHH, UHHH... YES DEAR...

WONDERFUL...WONDERFUL. WE *COULD* USE SOME HELP WITH THE PHONES. *UHH*, BUT CAN WE DISCUSS THIS TONIGHT? I'M, *UHHH*...

YES, SIR? NO, THERE IS STILL NO EVIDENCE AS YET THAT STATE LINES HAVE BEEN CROSSED. *UH-HUH*...

'BYE, DADDY.

SAMMY'S BAR

BENSLEY MORRIS INSURANCE CO.

SOOO, WHAT D'WE GOT?

GODDAMN LITTLE.

OUR "FRIEND" FOUND SOME FORGOTTEN SAFE WITH A MINE DETECTOR. MANAGED TO GRAB UP A LOT OF THE LEDGERS HIDDEN IN THAT SAFE WHEN HE RAN OUT.

BUT HE DID MISS A FEW.

MUSTN'T BE ABLE TO SEE TOO WELL THROUGH THAT FRIGGIN' MASK.

ANYTHING IN 'EM?

AHHH, I FOUND A COPY OF SOME BANKRUPTCY PAPERS FILED AND SIGNED BY SOME UPTOWN SHYSTER.

CHANGED HIS NAME SINCE THEN AND RETIRED. I'M GOING AFTER HIM NEXT.

SOON'S I WASH THE TASTE OF THAT GODDAMN GAS OUTTA MY MOUTH. JESUS, THAT'S TWICE NOW.

ASSHOLE'S NOT GETTIN' A THIRD.

YOU GOT NO FAMILY, RIGHT BURKE?

HAD A SISTER.

BUT SHE MARRIED A NIGGER.

AND GOOD DICKS MAKE LOUSY DADS.

TAK!

WELL, THAT'S GOOD. 'CAUSE YOU ARE ONE RELENTLESS SONUVABITCH. YOU'RE A GOOD DICK, BROTHER.

AMEN TO THAT.

GET HIM, BUTCHER.

10

SMAC

FOOOSH

WHUMP

WH-WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO H-HIM?!

HE...HE ISN'T DEAD...

IS HE?!

NO.

CLAC

THAT WAS ONLY KNOCK-OUT GAS.

THIS CARTRIDGE IS POISON.

NO!!

DON-- DON'T KILL HIM!

WHAT DO YOU WANT? ANYTHING--

YOU ARE FENTON DEVERE, FORMERLY ABRAHAM BERKOWITZ?

YES. YES, THAT'S ME. SO WHAT?

IT'S NO CRIME TO CHANGE YOUR NAME.

MAYBE NOT. YOU WERE ONCE A FINANCIAL LAWYER BUT NOW YOU LEAD A LIFE OF LEISURE...

I--I RETIRED EARLY. I HAD SOME VERY RICH CLIENTS... PL-PLEASE DON'T KILL HIM...

AND I NEED INFORMATION ON ONE OF THOSE CLIENTS...

WH-WHICH ONE?

THE OWNER OF THE EVERGOOD MILK COMPANY.

12

UHH, HIS NAME WAS SAUL LADMAN. HE'S DEAD NOW.

NO.

SAUL LADMAN IS LISTED IN THE LEDGERS AS OWNER. BUT ONLY AFTER 1935. ALL RECORDS ARE MISSING BEFORE THAT...

THE NAME IS A FALSE ONE.

AND YOU HAVE STARTED LYING.

NO! PLEASE! DON'T KILL ME! I SW--

FOOSH

MR. DEVERE? LIEUTENANT BURKE, NYPD. I--

WHATINHELL...?

EVV... GOO... --SSBOO--G CUV... AH... GOME... FPHT--

I JUST DON'T BELIEVE THIS SHIT.

HELLO, ROSS? IT'S BURKE. OHH, YEAH, I FOUND 'IM ALL RIGHT. BUT, LOOKS LIKE... WHAT?!

WHEN AND WHERE WAS SHE FOUND?

13

MY FATHER RETURNED FROM THE WAR PENNILESS, WEAKENED, AND SOLE PARENT TO A CHILD HE HAD NEVER KNOWN. TERRIFIED OF HIS OWN SURVIVAL, HE SOON BECAME A DISTANT, DRIVEN MAN. HIS COUGHING USED TO FRIGHTEN ME AT NIGHT.

WHY, WESLEY, M'BOY! COME IN, COME IN.

BRANDY FOR YOUR BONES?

NO, THANK YOU, THOMAS. I ACTUALLY STOPPED BY TO ASK YOU FOR A LITTLE *PRO BONO* ADVICE.

MY BONO'S NO LONGER PRO, WESLEY. I'M RETIRED! A-HEH, HEH...

ASK AWAY.

WELL, I'M TRYING TO CLEAR UP SOME OLD BUSINESS OF FATHER'S AND I'M LOOKING FOR A FORMER CREDITOR.

THIS FELLOW FILED FOR BANKRUPTCY UNDER AN ASSUMED NAME AND I SUSPECT HE MIGHT STILL HAVE POSSESSION OF SOME FORMER PROPERTY UNDER THE ALIAS.

WELLLL...

THE BANKRUPTCY COURT WOULD BE THE PLACE TO START. THEY SHOULD HAVE A TALLY OF ALL ASSETS AND WHAT BECAME OF THEM. AFTER THAT TRY THE TAX RECORDS.

SOMEBODY'S BOUND TO OWN IT. I TELL YOU, THIS TOWN'S A SNAKE-PIT OF REAL ESTATE SWIND--

SOUND ADVICE. I THINK I'LL SWING BY THE FEDERAL COURT-HOUSE ON MY WAY HOME.

AT THIS HOUR? WHY, THEY'LL BE CLOSED!

YES, I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT. I-AH-HEARD ON THE RADIO ABOUT THE TARANTULA'S LATEST VICTIM.

YES, IT'S JUST TERRIB--

CERTAINLY IS. ALL THE MORE REASON FOR ME TO JUST CALL IT AN EARLY EVENING. GOODNIGHT, THOMAS. AND THANK YOU AGAIN.

CERTAINLY, M'BOY!

YES.

YOU'RE... MORE THAN WELCOME. *HMMM...*

14

DIAN!

NO, DADDY.

PLEASE, DIAN. LET ME THROUGH...

YOU'RE NOT LEAVING UNTIL YOU TELL ME MORE.

DARLING, I DON'T *KNOW* ANY MORE YET. THE POLICE'VE FOUND ANOTHER BODY.

THEY'RE CERTAIN IT ISN'T CATHERINE'S.

HOW CAN *THEY* BE CERTAIN?

HAVE ANY OF THEM EVER *SEEN* HER?

THEY HAVE HER *PHOTOGRAPH!*

AND THE... FACE IS UNDAMAGED ENOUGH.

DADDY, YOU SAID I COULD HELP YOU OUT ON THIS CASE AND YOU SAID WE WOULD SPEAK ABOUT IT TONIGHT!

TAKE ME ALONG WITH YOU DOWNTOWN.

CERTAINLY NOT! I FELL FOR THAT ONCE, BUT THIS IS NO PLACE FOR A GIRL RIGHT NOW.

MY BEING A *WOMAN'S* GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH IT!!

WELL THEN, HOW'S THIS? YOU'RE *NOT* AN OFFICER OF THE COURT AND YOU HAVE NO *OFFICIAL* BUSINESS THERE.

YOU'RE MY ONLY DAUGHTER.

AND I LOVE YOU. BUT NOW LOCK THE DOOR BEHIND ME AND *GOOD NIGHT!*

CLAC

ONLY YOUR DAUGHTER, HUH?

CLAS

16

CLANK-

CLANG-
CLAC

HEY!!

WHATTHHELL ZIS?!

CLANG
CLAC

WHAT KINDA GOOFBALL WOULD PULL A STUNT LIKE THIS?

17

AS A YOUNGSTER, I WOULD SOMETIMES WAKE AT NIGHT CRYING OUT FOR MY MOTHER. MY FATHER FOUND HIMSELF AT A LOSS AT HOW TO SOOTHE ME. HIS STANDARD RESPONSE SOON BECAME THAT SOON THE SANDMAN WOULD LULL ALL MY TROUBLES AWAY.

HE NEVER KNEW HOW MUCH I BELIEVED HIM.

WHY, DIAN, YOU'RE BECOMING A REGULAR FIXTURE ON MY DOORSTEP! NOT THAT I'M COMPLAINING, MIND YOU--

WESLEY, PLEASE...

COULD WE GO INSIDE AND TALK?

SURELY.

I-I'M AFRAID I HAVE SOME FURTHER QUESTIONS I COULD USE YOUR HELP WITH. ANOTHER DEAD WOMAN HAS BEEN FOUND.

HUMPHRIES, WE'LL HAVE TEA, PLEASE.

DEAR LORD, I WAS AFRAID OF THIS. HOW ARE YOU HOLDING UP?

WELL ENOUGH, I SUPPOSE, BUT--

WELL, I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID THE OTHER NIGHT, ABOUT BEING ON THE INSIDE OF THIS CASE AND ALL. AND SOOO...

AND SO I CRACKED MY FATHER'S WALL SAFE AND READ HIS CONFIDENTIAL FILES ON THE ENTIRE INVESTIGATION.

YOU'RE JOKING!

DEAD SERIOUS. WES, WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT ALBERT GOLDMAN?

18

ALBERT GOLDMAN?!

YES, I REMEMBER YOU MENTIONING HIM WHEN YOU STOPPED BY OUR HOUSE THE OTHER NIGHT. GOD, THAT SEEMS FOREVER AGO NOW.

WELL, HE-- UHHH, THAT IS...

WHY DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

HIS NAME WAS MENTIONED IN SOME OF THESE FILES.

WELL, AS I SAID THE OTHER NIGHT...

... ALBERT WAS AN OLD BOOTLEGGER AND MY FATHER HAD SOME DEALINGS WITH HIM. MAINLY FOR TRUCKING SUPPLIES. YOUR FATHER SEEMED TO THINK THAT ALBERT STILL HASN'T CLEANED UP HIS ACT SINCE THE REPEAL.

I REALLY DON'T KNOW MUCH MORE THAN THAT.

WHAT DID THE FILE SAY ABOUT HIM?

WELL, ACTUALLY THERE WERE SEVERAL FILES.

MY FATHER HAS APPARENTLY BEEN AFTER HIM FOR QUITE SOME TIME IN REGARDS TO LAUNDERING OLD LIQUOR MONEY. NO LUCK THERE SO FAR, BUT THE KIDNAPPING FILE ALSO PLACES HIM AS A RECENT KNOWN ASSOCIATE.

YOUR FRIEND KNEW ALBERT GOLDMAN?

THE DAY SHE WAS KIDNAPPED, SHE TOLD ME SHE'D RECENTLY BEEN HAVING A FLING WITH A GANGSTER. IT WAS NEWS TO ME AT THE TIME.

CATHERINE *LOVED* HER LITTLE SECRETS.

19

ENTREZ VOUS!

KNOC-KNOCK

CELIA, DEAR, I--UMMM... UH--

COME IN, DARLING AND CLOSE THE DOOR. YOUR RETINAS ARE SHOWING.

WELL, I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT...

...IT'S FINALLY DONE. THE TRUST IS UNDER YOUR NAME AT THE FIRST BANK OF HOLLYWOOD.

AND THE MATURITY DATE?

WHEN I... PASS ON, GOD FORBID.

OH YES, GOD FORBID, DARLING.

C-C-C-CELIA...

OF COURSE, GOD FORBIDS A LOT OF THINGS THAT HAPPEN ANYWAY.

CELIA...

N-N-NO--NOT NOW! DOWN-STAIRS! THEY'RE ALL--

PROBABLY TOO DRUNK TO STAND, BY NOW. AND BESIDES...

YOU NEVER MINDED WHEN I WAS YOUNGER. AM I GETTING TOO OLD FOR YOU, ALBERT?

20

N-N-NOOOOO... AH--AHHHHH

HUSH, LITTLE POPPA. HUSH.

MOTHER... I'M AFRAID THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU.

ALL RIGHT, FRIEND, WHO OWNED EVERGOOD MILK?!

I TOLD YOU...

HIS NAME WAS SAUL LADMAN.

WHICH IS BULLSHIT. THERE IS NO SAUL LADMAN. HIS BUSINESS LICENSE IS A PHONY.

THAT'S-- THAT'S ALL I KNOW.

OH, NO IT AIN'T! YOU'RE LIVIN' TOO GOOD TO BE EVEN. WHY DID YOU FILE THAT BANKRUPTCY UNDER AN ALIAS?!

I-- I DIDN'T KNOW...

YOU ARE LOOKING AT ACCOMPLICE CHARGES IN A KIDNAPPING *AND* MURDER, SHITHEAD! AND THAT MEANS THE CHAIR, CAPICHE?!

I--I SWEAR I DIDN'T KNOW...

CRAC-

I CAN'T TELL YOU!!

HA! HA!

YOU'RE CHANGIN' YOUR TUNE AND I'M STILL ON PERCUSSION! *DON'T KNOW OR CAN'T TELL.!!*

SMAC-

COME ON! THIS HOSE AIN'T HURTIN' ANY MORE 'N I AM!

ALLRI--ALL RIGHT. ENOUGH. HIS REAL NAME WAS MYRON FIELDS.

NEVER HEARD OF HIM.

HE WAS A BLIND. AN ACCOUNTANT. HE WAS BUDDIES WITH ALBERT GOLDMAN. GOLDMAN USED EVERGOOD MILK AS A COVER FOR BOOZE RUNS.

AHHH... NONE A' YOU GOONS CAN HOLD A SECRET...

22

I DREAM IN THE DARK TIDALS-- POOLS OF GREED.

WHERE UNQUENCHABLE APPETITES SHAPE THE CHURNING, ENDLESS WAVES.

INTO A VORTEX

OF DELIRIUM AND HATRED.

WHERE LOVE IS A POSSESSION.

CARELESS OF ALL IDENTITY.

AND EVERY COUPLING A RAPE.

GRACELESS, DESPERATE AND COLD.

THIS IS THE INCEST OF THE SPIRIT.

NOOO!!

THE SUCKING PULL OF NAMELESS DESIRES.

THAT LEAVE THE MIND NUMB AND THE WILL AIMLESS. UNABLE TO EVER SAY...

WHA--!! WHAT!?

MR. DODDS, WAKE UP! IT'S ONLY ME, HUMPHRIES.

GOOD MORNING, MARTHA. WHERE'S MY FATHER THIS MORNING?

HE HAD A PHONE CALL, MISS.

I'M SORRY, SIR. BUT YOU HAVE AN EARLY VISITOR THIS MORNING.

DON'T TELL ME-- DIAN BELMONT.

NO, SIR. IT'S JUDGE SCHAEFFER AND HE SEEMS RATHER ANXIOUS, I MUST SAY.

THAT'S THOMAS.

GOOD LORD, DADDY, YOU LOOK TERRIBLE.

DON'T TELL ME THAT YOU'VE BEEN UP ALL NIGHT.

IT'S WORSE THAN JUST THAT, I'M AFRAID.

GOOD MORNING, THOMAS. COME TO COLLECT BREAKFAST ON YOUR *PRO BONO* FAVORS?

NO, M'BOY, I'VE MORE HORRIBLE NEWS TO CONVEY.

WHAT IS IT, DADDY?

I JUST HEARD FROM HEADQUARTERS. THEY'VE RECEIVED ANOTHER NOTE.

THIS BLOODY TARANTULA HAS STRUCK AGAIN!

THIS TIME IT'S THE DAUGHTER OF A FAIRLY NOTORIOUS GANGSTER.

HER NAME IS CELIA GOLDMAN.

DC

VERTIGO

NO. 4

JUL 93

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

"Behind the keening laughter, her eyes stank with the years of hatred and shame..."

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE™

by Matt Wagner and Guy Davis

GAVIN WILSON

MR. AND MRS. GOLDMAN, THIS IS LIEUTENANT BURKE AND HE'LL BE CONDUCTING MOST OF THIS INTERVIEW.

ERRR... I--

THANK YOU, CHIEF O'DONALD. YOU'LL PLEASE EXCUSE MY HUSBAND?

YES, MA'AM.

NOW THEN, YOU'VE SAID YOUR DAUGHTER HAD PLANNED TO GO OUT FOR THE EVENING. WHO SAW HER LAST?

I DID. SHE WAS DRESSING. SH-SHE WAS ALL RIGHT, THEN.

I-I CAN PAY FOR MY DAUGHTER'S RELEASE. I--I'M A VERY WEALTHY MAN--

DID YOU SEE HER ACTUALLY LEAVE THE HOUSE, SIR?

I SAW HER.

SHE TOOK HER OWN CAR INTO THE CITY.

AND THE CAR IS STILL MISSING. MRS. GOLDMAN, HOW 'BOUT YOU?

I TURN IN EARLY, LIEUTENANT. I WAS ALREADY ASLEEP.

YES, THE NEXT MORNING. I'M USUALLY UP BEFORE THE SUN.

THE NOTE WAS LEFT UNDER THE MORNING MILK BOTTLES.

BUT YOU FOUND THE NOTE, AM I CORRECT?

AND THEN YOU WOKE YOUR HUSBAND?

I--

NO, I WAITED TILL HE ROSE. SEVERAL HOURS LATER.

MY HUSBAND AND I HAVE AN... AGREE-MENT ABOUT ENTERING EACH OTHER'S ROOM.

HIS DRINKING HABITS, YOU UNDERSTAND...

I--NOT TRUE!!

DEAR GOD, MIRIAM, THIS IS OUR BABY!!

OUR BABY! YOU NEVER EVEN WANTED US TO HAVE HER! YOU WANTED ME TO--

SHUT UP, WOMAN!

I-I LOVE THAT GIRL! YOU CAN'T DENY--

YOU LOVE HER LIKE A PUPPY! YOU'RE THE ONE THAT LETS HER STAY OUT ALL NIGHT--ALL NIGHT WITH GOD KNOWS HOW MANY MEN!

YOU THINK I HAVE A CHOICE! JESUS CHRIST, YOU'RE BOTH THE SAME--

I NEVER TAUGHT HER TO BE A WHORE.

FINE!!

KRSSH

THIS IS ALL JUST SO TYPICAL AND FINE!! GENTLEMEN...

...I'LL BE IN THE DEN IF YOU HAVE FURTHER QUESTIONS.

PERHAPS WE SHOULD STOP THERE, FOR NOW.

BUT...

LIEUTENANT, I THINK THE VICTIM'S FAMILY COULD USE SOME TIME TO THEMSELVES.

YES, SIR.

OH, MR. GOLDMAN, ONE MORE THING... HEARD FROM MYRON FIELDS LATELY?

WHO?

MYRON FIELDS, 'S MY NEW ACCOUNTANT. SAID HE DID SOME WORK FOR YOU IN THE PAST.

MUST'VE BEEN FAIRLY MINOR BOOKKEEPING, LIEUTENANT. I DON'T REMEMBER THE NAME.

YEAH?

WELL, MAYBE I'M MISTAKEN. WE'LL BE IN TOUCH, SIR.

2

GOOD EVENING, GENTLEMEN. AND, THANK YOU...

WELL, WHATTAYA FIGURE?

IT'S MESSY ALL RIGHT.

BUT I FEEL CERTAIN THIS FAMILY WAS INVOLVED LONG BEFORE THE DAUGHTER DISAPPEARED.

YOU DON'T BELIEVE SHE WAS KIDNAPPED?

MAYBE. BUT FIRST I'M GOING TO CHECK OUT MR. MYRON FIELDS. MICKEY, YOU DRIVE ME.

CAR 23, YOU GUYS GO WITH HIM.

OH M-M-MIRIAM...

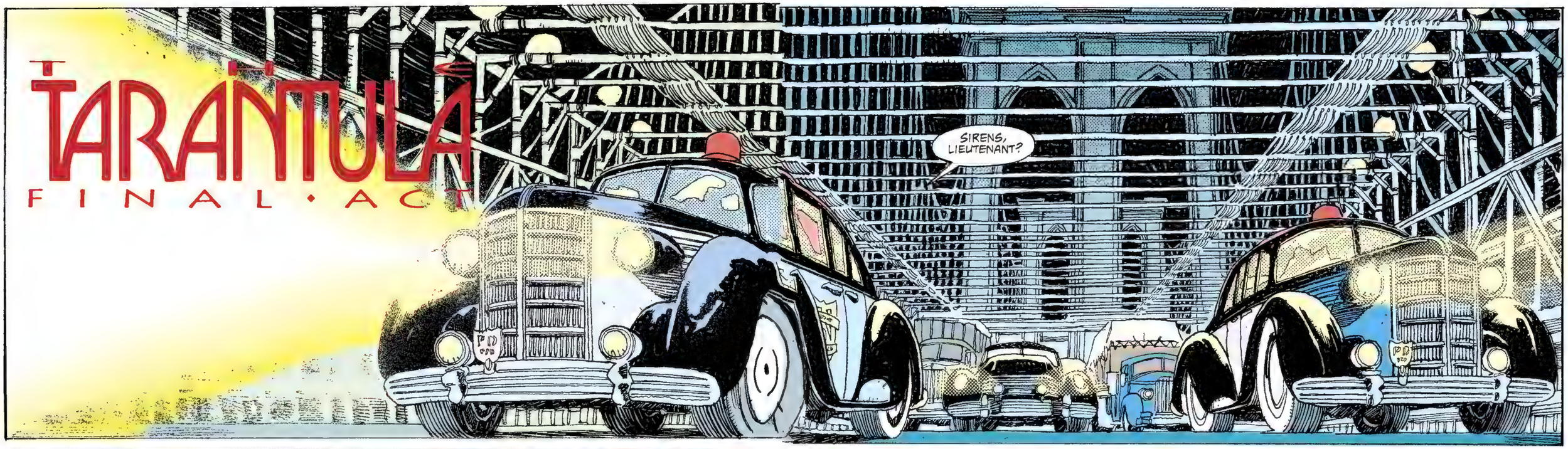
YES?

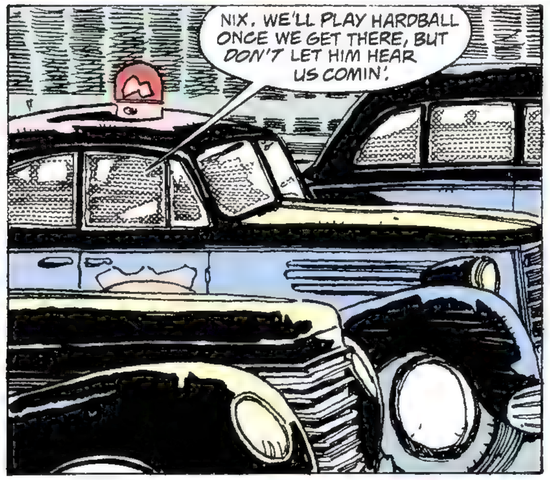
WHAT W-WILL WE DO-IF-SHE-- SHE...

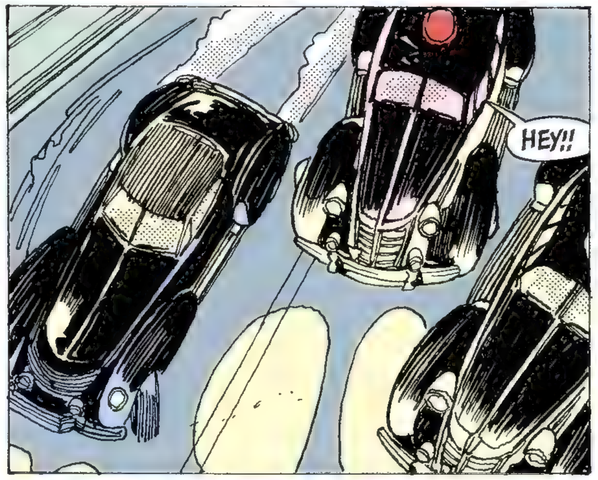
BURY HER, ALBERT.

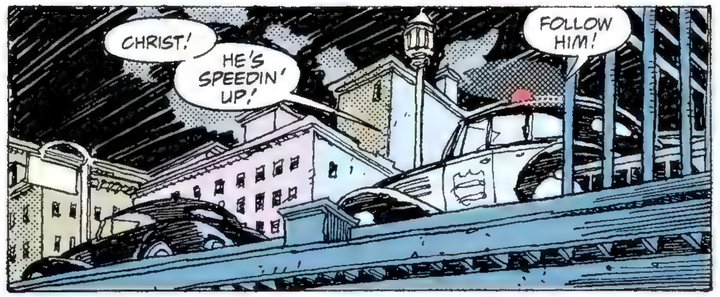
WHAT ELSE?

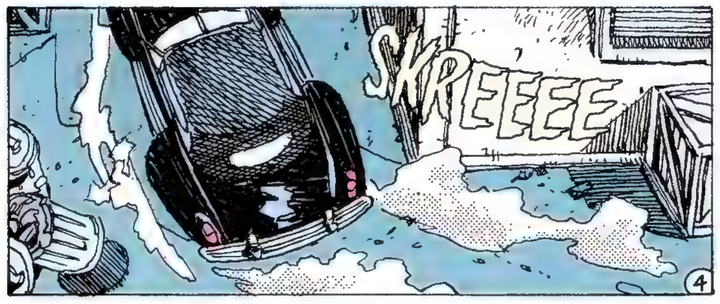
THE TARANTULA
FINAL ACT

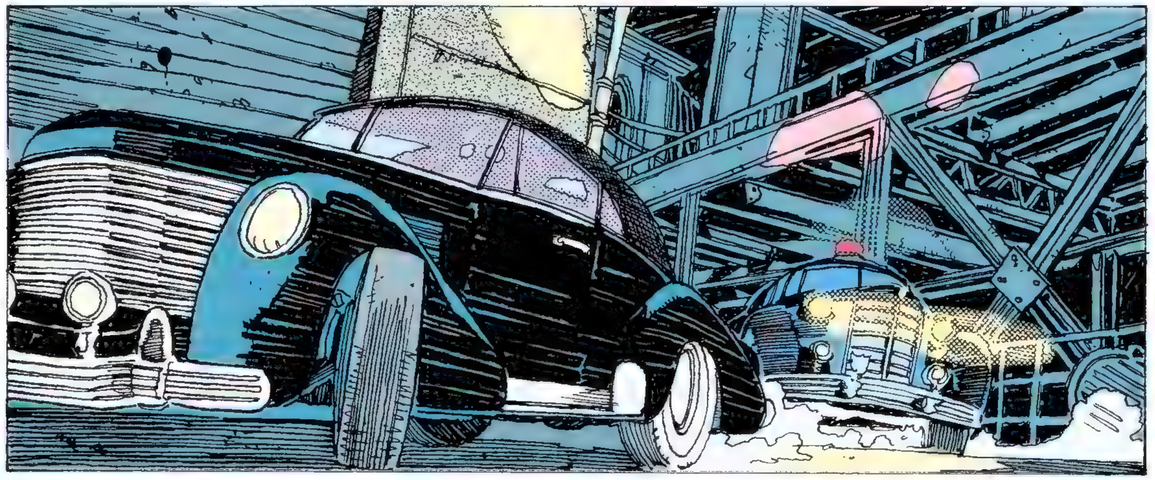


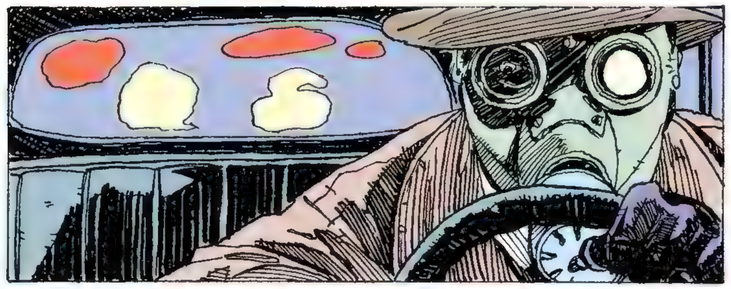


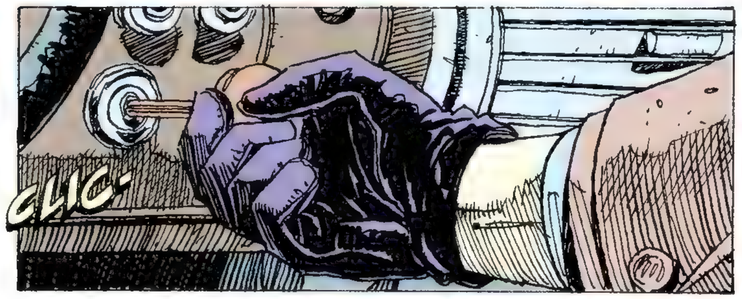


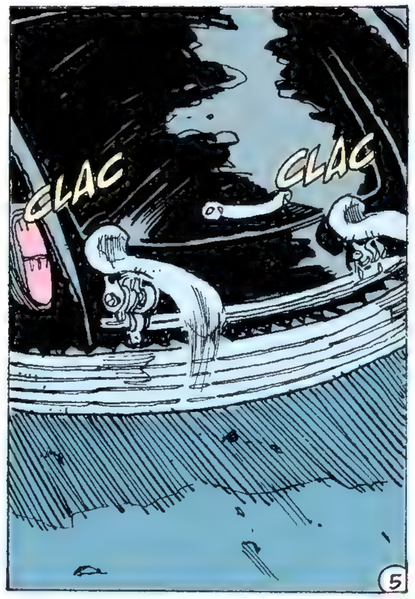












CLAG CLANG CLANG CLANG CLANG CLANG

LOOK OUT!!

PD

HARD RIGHT!!

HEY!! LEGGO!!

PTOOM

SHIT!!

GODDAMN

BASTARD

MOTHER

SCREEEEEE

6

YYAAAHH--

WHAT

WANT

YOU

WHO

MYRON FIELDS...

PLEASANT DREAMS!

OPEN YOUR EYES AND SWALLOW, MYRON. YOU MUST ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR ME.

G-G-GGHCK... GLB...

YYYES?

YOU WERE BEAN-COUNTER FOR ALBERT GOLDMAN'S BOOT-LEGGING NETWORK.

YYYES.

THEN YOU KNOW OF THE EVERGOOD MILK COVER.

WHY IS THE ABANDONED BOTTLING PLANT NOW OWNED BY ROGER GOLDMAN, AND *NOT* HIS FATHER?

PPPUNISHMENT.

RRROGER LOST A FORTUNE IN G-GAMBLING SEVERAL YEARS AG-G-G--

SWALLOW.

7

THE I.R.S. NAILED HIM, THEN. FAILURE TO REPORT HIS LOSSESSS. AL B-BAILED HIM OUT BUT NEVER LET THE KID FORG-G-GET IT.

AND THE EVERGOOD BUILDING?

THAT AND SOME OTHER DUMPS. KID'S ONLY LEGA-G--G...

SWALLOW.

INHERITANCE. AL SAID NOW D'KID WOULD HAVE TO REALLY *MAKE* SOMETHING FOR HISSELF-- 'COURSE HE NEVER DID.

AL'S ALWAYS HAD PROBLEMS WIDDAT KID.

HOW SO?

G-G-GOT KICKED OUTTA TWO PRIVATE SCHOOLS EARLIER ON. ONE FOR ATTACKIN' SOME SKIRT AND THE OTHER FOR KILLIN' SOME TEACHER'S DOG.

EVEN CUT UP THE POOCH, I HEARD. ONLY BEAT UP THE DAME. AL DIN'T EVEN WANT TH'KID STAYIN' AT HOME NO MORE, BUT HIS WIFE-- SHE INSISTED.

SHEEES ALLAYS BIN TOO...

...SOFF ON DA KI...

THANK YOU, MYRON. GO TO SLEEP NOW.

GLLLG--

SO THAT'S ABOUT IT, DISTRICT ATTORNEY BELMONT.

BURKE'S CONVINCED *SOME*BODY FROM THE GOLDMAN FAMILY IS IN ON IT.

AND YOU, ROSS?

WELL, THE MILK TRUCK DOES POINT TO IT. DAMN FUNNY COINCIDENCE. AND THEN, THERE'S THE NOTE. ALL THE OTHERS WERE DELIVERED BY MAIL.

PLUS, "*GOLDEN AL*" IS DEFINITELY LYIN' ABOUT THE ACCOUNTANT--

BUT THAT COULD JUST BE HIS OLD MOB INSTINCTS

WHERE'S BURKE NOW?

CHECKIN' OUT THE *MONEY-BOY*. NAME'S MYRON FIELDS.

MYRON FIELDS? WHY *SURE!* HE USED TO WORK FOR "*YOUNG BOY*" EDDIE GREEN, AN EARLY BOOTLEGGER WHOSE EMPIRE AL GOLDMAN EVENTUALLY TOOK OVER.

SURE, I REMEMBER. EDDIE GOT DROPPED IN THE RIVER.

THAT'S RIGHT.

WELL, MAYBE THIS FIELDS GUY *CAN* LAY DOWN SOME USEFUL POOP ON OLD GOLDMAN. WE NEED A DAMN *GOOD REASON* FOR A WARRANT AT THIS POINT.

GODDAMN MESS HOWEVER YOU SLICE IT.

WHAT A HORRID THOUGHT. HIS OWN DAUGHTER...

YOU SAID HE *WAS* VERY DISTRAUGHT, THOUGH?

YEAH, BUT SO WHAT?

TO A MAN WHO COULD DO *THAT* TO A WOMAN...

DECEPTION'S LIKE A SECOND SKIN.

METRO

SCREEEECH

I'M LIEUTENANT BURKE.

HOW LONG YOU GUYS BEEN HERE?

RIGHT AFTER YOU PHONED IN. MAYBE HALF HOUR.

AND? HOW'S IT LOOK?

GUY WAS NEARLY DEAD. THE AMBULANCE JUST LEFT.

DAMN IT!!

CHAUNCY! WHATTA WE GOT?

OUR BOY WAS FOUND ON THE TOILET, STARK NAKED. HE HAD STOPPED BREATHIN' BUT THE DOCS THINK THEY GOT HERE IN TIME. WE'LL KNOW LATER.

ALSO FOUND *THIS* PERCHED ON HIS STOMACH. PHOTOGRAPHER'S IN THERE NOW.

I'LL TAKE THAT. THANKS.

OKAY, THEN, MY LITTLE "*FRIEND*."

LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO SAY *THIS* TIME.

In a nightmare dimension
On a travesty plane
Hangs a foul, tattered web
Filled with victims and pain.
But let this insect beware
He will know just the same.

--The Sandman

WELL, GOOD NIGHT, BOYS. LET'S HOPE TOMORROW BRINGS US A LITTLE HOPE.

I'LL CALL AS SOON AS WE KNOW SOMETHING. GOOD NIGHT, SIR.

POLICE

HMMM...

I WONDER IF MY FILES HAVE ANYTHING ON EVERGOOD?

WHAT?

CLIC CLIC

THE LIGHT'S BURNED OU--

DISTRICT ATTORNEY, I ASSURE YOU I INTEND NO HARM.

Y-YOU AGAIN--!

CLIC

I AM HERE TO OFFER YOU INFORMATION. NEWS THAT MAY SERVE TO END THIS WAVE OF TERROR

WILL YOU LISTEN?

PLEASE... YES...

WHAT IS IT?

THE OWNER OF THE EVERGOOD MILK BUILDING IS ROGER GOLDMAN, AS PART OF HIS BLACK-SHEEP INHERITANCE FROM HIS FATHER.

THE YOUNG MAN ALSO HAS A HISTORY OF VICIOUS OUTBURSTS. AT THE VERY LEAST, HE SHOULD BE DETAINED FOR QUESTIONING.

WITH THE POLICE SO VERY CLOSE, HE MAY PANIC AND FLEE.

WELL, JUST WHO ARE YOU, MISTER?

AND WHAT'S YOUR INTEREST IN ALL THIS?

11

TO SEE THE WICKED BROUGHT LOW AND TO INSURE THE SLEEP OF THE JUST.

I AM THE SANDMAN.

AND NONE CAN ESCAPE MY DARK DREAMS.

NO! PLEASE, I...

...WON'T...

SEY

CENTRAL DISPATCH? THIS IS DISTRICT ATTORNEY LAWRENCE BELMONT. PATCH ME THROUGH TO ROSS O'DONALD.

ROSS? GET BACK HERE AT ONCE! SOMETHING'S JUST COME UP!

WE'VE GOT A LIKELY SUSPECT.

DRIN

12

HIYA, POPS. DARK IN HERE.

WHAT IS IT, ROGER?

WELL? WHAT DO YOU WANT? I'M IN NO MOOD FOR YOU RIGHT NOW.

I... JUST WANTED TO APOLOGIZE. FOR EARLIER, WI-WITH THE POLICE.

YOU ALWAYS WERE AN EMOTIONAL PUNK. TAKE AFTER YOUR MOTHER, THERE.

THAT ALL?

YEAH, I...

I GUESS I'M GOING OUT NOW.

OKAY?

WHATEVER.

MY LITTLE GIRL'S A VICTIM IN HELL AND ALL MY *SON* CAN THINK ABOUT IS GETTIN' LAID.

PERFECT.

YEAH... TAKE AFTER MY FATHER, THERE.

NO ONE CAN TRULY ESCAPE THE EFFECTS OF THEIR UPBRINGING.

HONK HONK

MY FATHER ALWAYS HID THE SCARS ABOUT HIS CHEST AND THROAT EVEN FROM ME.

WESLEY?!

HAVE YOU SEEN A RECENT-MODEL COUPE JUST DRIVE BY HERE?

WELL... NO.

AND I HAVE ALWAYS FELT NAKED WITHOUT AT LEAST A SHIRT AND TIE.

DAMN IT! I FOLLOWED IT TO THIS AREA OF TOWN, BUT LOST HIM SEVERAL CORNERS BACK. YOUR PLACE WAS RIGHT HERE, SO I THOUGHT MAYBE...

WES, DO YOU THINK THE HALL OF RECORDS IN THE FEDERAL COURTHOUSE IS STILL OPEN? I NEED TO CHECK SOMEONE'S REAL-ESTATE HOLDINGS.

NO, I SUSPECT THEY'RE CLOSED.

OH WELL, THANKS, WESLEY! GOTTA RUN!

DIAN! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU OWNED A CAR...

I DON'T. THIS IS DADDY'S. AND WON'T HE JUST BE SO SURPRISED TO LEARN I'VE TAKEN IT? 'BYE!

YES, QUITE THE SURPRISE...

CLIC

CREEEEE-

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

HUMAN NATURE DOESN'T BEGIN TWISTED AND STRANGE. THE DORMANT SEEDS OF EVIL GESTATE IN THE SOUL THROUGH YEARS-- SOMETIMES GENERATIONS--OF MORAL DECAY.

METRO

POLIC

WH--CHIEF O'DONALD! YOU'VE HEARD SOMETHING?!

NO, I'M SORRY, MR. GOLDMAN.

I'M AFRAID WE'D LIKE TO SPEAK TO YOUR SON, AGAIN.

MY S--

ROGER?!

WHY, HE... HE'S NOT HERE.

POLIC

MISS BELMONT...

...I DON'T CARE WHAT HIS OFFICE TOLD YOU. YOUR FATHER AIN'T HERE. HE WENT OUT ON A COLLAR WIT' D'CHIEF.

PLEASE, SERGEANT...

IT'S *VERY* IMPORTANT THAT I *SPEAK* TO HIM. CAN'T YOU TELL ME WHERE HE IS?

I'M SORRY. I *CAN'T* GIVE OUT THAT INFO-- ...*EVENIN'*, 'TENANT BURKE.

COLEMAN.

YOU'RE LIEUTENANT BURKE?

THAT'S ME, MISS--?

BELMONT. DIAN BELMONT.

YOU THE *D.A.'S* KID?

THAT'S RIGHT. LIEUTENANT, MIGHT I PLEASE SPEAK TO YOU IN PRIVATE?

15

...SO HE'D NEED A SPACE BIG ENOUGH TO HIDE A CAR AND A TRUCK. NOW MY FATHER SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT...

YES, YES, MISS BELMONT...

BUT...

WE'VE CHECKED EVERY COMMERCIAL GARAGE IN MANHATTAN. BELIEVE ME--

LIEUTENANT, I'M TRYING TO SAY THAT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIND WHERE HE'S HOLDING THEM!

I NEED TO GET INTO THE FEDERAL COURTHOUSE TONIGHT.

ANY IDEA WHERE YOUR SON MIGHT BE FOUND AT THIS HOUR, SIR?

NO, I...UH, MY WIFE IS MORE FAMILIAR WITH ROGER'S ACTIVITIES. SHOULD I BE CONTACTING MY LAWYER, GENTLEMEN?

MIGHT BE AN IDEA. IS IT POSSIBLE TO ASK MRS. GOLDMAN ABOUT YOUR SON'S WHEREABOUTS?

SHE'S... ASLEEP.

BU--BUT OF COURSE I'LL JUST WAKE HER. YOU THINK ROGER IS SOMEHOW RESPONSIBLE...

SIR, PLEASE...

MIRIAM...?

I'M, UH... SORRY TO INTRUDE, MY DEAR, BUT IT'S THE POLICE AGAIN. THEY WANT TO SPEAK TO ROGER, AND I...

...I--I... M-MIRIAM?

16

(PANT)
(PANT)
YOU... FINALLY... HAD TO... DO IT, DIDN'T YOU?!
(PANT) WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE SAYING?!
WUH--WUSN'T THE FIRST...YOU-- YOU FUH--
SWAC CRAC-
MISERABLE LITTLE WITCH!!
CRAC-
CRIC-
CRAC-
AHHH...OUT FOR NOW...
PITY.
(PANT)
(PANT)
STILL... THERE'S ALWAYS LATER. ALWAYS LATER.
AND OUR OTHER PRETTY GUEST TO ATTEND TO.
17

YOUR EYES STILL HOLD SOME VENOM, LITTLE SHIKSA.

BUT NOT FOR LONG.

CRAC-

THIS HAS ALL JUST GOTTEN OUT OF HAND.

SHOT TO HELL. OUR PLANS FOR REDEMPTION ARE OVER.

WHICH MEANS...

-SPAC

...I'M AFRAID...

...THAT WE NO LONGER NEED YOU.

STAND WHERE YOU ARE AND LOWER YOUR WEAPON!!

CHAK-

YYAAAGHH--

ZZZT

ZZZT

GGAH!!

AKGLLG--

WH-WHO ARE YOU?

AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY MOTHER!!

GET AWAY FROM HER!

ROGER GOLDMAN.

YOU ARE TRULY THE TARANTULA. YOURS, THE HAND THAT WROUGHT THESE BRUTAL DEEDS.

YOU MOTHER WAS ONLY THE MASTERMIND.

SHUT UP.

AND DROP THE GUN.

NOW!

BUT, YOU...

...WERE THE ACTUAL MURDER WEAPON.

HOW WAS IT, ROGER?

WHAT MADE YOU FINALLY STRIKE OUT AT YOUR SISTER? OR WAS SHE THE REAL TARGET ALL ALONG?

CLAC

WHAT WAS THE TARANTULA'S REASON FOR EXISTENCE?

I SAID, SHUT UP! AND GET FACE DOWN ON THE FLOOR!

R-ROGER...?

YOU WERE NEVER AFTER ANY RANSOM MONEY. TELL ME, ROGER...

WERE THE OTHER GIRLS...

...ONLY PRACTICE?

20

I TOLD YOU TO SHUT U-

PUH-P--

GHck--

GHck--

21

WHUMP

TSE-

TSE--

TSE--

SPG

TSSSSSSS...

LOOK OUT!!

THUD

YYAAAAAAA-- UNPH!

MY

YOU

GOD-DAMN

DEVIL--

CRAC

MISTER-- ARE-- ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

WEEOOWEEOOWEEOOOO

WHICH HELPED HER SHAKE OFF THE GAS, SO QUICKLY.

YES. IS YOUR MOTHER A HEAVY DRINKER?

A SOUSE.

CLAC

22

CATHHHERRRINNNNE...

C-C-C--

CATHERINE...?

D...D...DUH--

DIAN..?! DIAN, AM I D-DEAD? OR'S THIS STILL REALLY HA--HA--HAPPENING?!

YOU'RE SAFE.

THE POLICE ARE HERE.

NO, NO... IT'S OKAY, DARLING.

DIAN, I--I THINK MY WRISTS ARE BROKEN. AND IT HURTS WHEN I BRE-BREATHE VERY DEEP...

SHHH, YOU'RE GOING TO BE FINE.

OH, WHO COULD HAVE DONE THIS TO ANYONE?

WHO COULD HAVE DONE THIS TO YOU?

"FROM WHENCE COME TARANTULAS TO PREY AND KILL? NO ONE KNOWS. BUT CERTAIN VENOMOUS BREEDS ARE THE SPAWN OF BLACK WIDOWS.

SIGNED "THE SANDMAN."

LIEUTENANT...

THERE'S AN OPEN TRANSOM OVER HERE THAT LEADS INTO THE ALLEY. HE'S GONE FOR SURE.

YOU MEAN, "FOR NOW," MC NICHOLS.

HE'S GONE FOR NOW.

23

THAT SUNDAY EVENING I JOINED THOMAS AS HE PLAYED HOST FOR AN EVENING OUT WITH THE BELMONTS. AN EFFORT TO TAKE THEIR MINDS OFF THEIR RECENT, HARROWING ADVENTURES. A REMARKABLE WOMAN.

...DIAN! YES, SHE WAS QUITE THE HERO IN ALL THIS MESS.

DADDY...

YES, HOW EXACTLY DID YOU FIGURE THIS ALL OUT AGAIN?

SHE EAVESDROPPED ON HER OLD MAN AND THEN BEAT HIM TO THE PUNCH!

SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN SHARP AS A TACK, BELMONT.

I HEARD THIS SANDMAN FELLOW TELLING DADDY ABOUT ROGER GOLDMAN'S "BLACK-SHEEP" INHERITANCE. I MERELY GOT THE POLICE TO CHECK HIS CURRENT TAX RECORDS FOR ANY OTHER PROPERTY HE OWNED -- PART OF THE VERY SAME LEGACY.

VERY CLEVER. HOW'S YOUR FRIEND?

RECUPERATING, SLOWLY.

I'M STILL A TRIFLE CONFUSED WHY THIS WHOLE ELABORATE SCENARIO GOT STARTED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

ALBERT GOLDMAN HAD BEEN MOLESTING HIS OWN DAUGHTER FOR YEARS--WRETCHED *BEAST.*

FINALLY, SHE TURNED THE TABLES AND MADE *HIM* HER OBEDIENT SLAVE. EVER SINCE THE REPEAL SHE'D BEEN HAVING HIM LAUNDER HIS DIRTY MONEY INTO *HER* VARIOUS INTERESTS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

AND THE TARANTULA?

A DESPERATE PLAN BY THE MOTHER AND SON TO REVENGE THEMSELVES ON THE OTHER TWO. THEY KNEW THEY WOULD GET NOTHING WHEN ALBERT DIED.

MEANWHILE, ALBERT HAD POOR CATHERINE ON THE SIDE. THE WIFE THOUGHT HER HUSBAND'S MISTRESS *MIGHT* KNOW SOMETHING, SO THEY ABDUCTED HER, CREATING "*THE TARANTULA*" AS THEIR COVER.

THE OTHER... GIRLS WERE ONLY TO SCARE CATHERINE... RANDOM VICTIMS...I...

WELL... FINALLY THE FIENDS LOST CONTROL OF THEIR HATRED AND JUST WENT AFTER CELIA.

GOOD LORD, WHAT A NIGHTMARE. ONE THAT I AM *MORE* THAN HAPPY TO HAVE MISSED.

24

ARE YOU SURE YOU WON'T JOIN US, SON? GIVE YOUR REGARDS TO BROADWAY?

NO, I'M SORRY.

YOU SURE, WES? LILLIAN HELLMAN'S *THE LITTLE FOXES*. I HEAR IT'S BRILLIANT.

I'LL HAVE TO CATCH A MATINEE. I'M AFRAID I'VE JUST BEEN SO BUSY, WHY, IT FEELS LIKE SOMEONE ELSE'S BEEN DOING MY SLEEPING *FOR* ME.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR DINNER, THOUGH, THOMAS.

CERTAINLY, M'BOY! GOOD NIGHT.

WES?

YES, DIAN?

I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANKS AGAIN FOR ALL YOUR HELP IN THIS AFFAIR. I KNOW I CAME ON STRONG WITH A LOT OF PROBLEMS AND NEEDS RIGHT AWAY...

NONSENSE, DIAN. PROBLEM-SOLVING'S MY SPECIALTY AND YOU ARE *FAR* FROM WHAT I WOULD EVER CALL "*NEEDY*." ENJOY THE PLAY.

PLEASANT DREAMS, WES.

THE • END

DC

VERTIGO

S

G 93

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

THE FACE

1 OF 4

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE™

"...like some giant insect, the masked man hurried off, disappearing into the mist."

by Matt Wagner & John Watkiss

THE FACE

"His people's history
was a mixture
of rage
in the name
of order,
and death
in the name
of pride."

— Feb 26, 1938.

Chinatown.

Funny thing about Daddy.

He can be so analytical. But seldom when it comes to himself.

Or me.

I'm sure he thinks Freud is nothing but an old degenerate but, damn it, there are times when he is downright jealous of me! I can remember when he wouldn't think twice about my going to Chinatown.

These days he complains more about Harlem, but it used to be Chinatown. Ever since that summer three years ago...

Which only made this evening's events all the more terrible in every way.

If only he knew who I ran into before leaving the restaurant. Whew.

MMM... MMMM, I DO LOVE THIS STYLE OF COOKING!

YOU MEAN LETTING SOMEONE ELSE DO IT?

YOU ARE HUNGRY AGAIN IN AN HOUR, THOUGH. REALLY.

TOO SALTY.

AND TOO WEIRD-LOOKING FOR ME. WHEN'D YOU GET SUCH A TASTE FOR THIS STUFF, DIAN?

SEVERAL SUMMERS AGO.

DADDY INSISTED I TAKE A SUMMER JOB AS A LAW CLERK ON WALL STREET,

I USED TO COME OVER HERE WITH... ANOTHER CLERK FOR LUNCH SOMETIMES.

AND LUNCH LED TO DINNERS. AND DINNERS LED TO EVENINGS. AND EVENINGS AND EVENINGS AND EVENINGS.

HOW ARE YOU, DIAN?

J-JIMMY!!

WHAT ARE YOU... UHH-- I--I HAD HEARD YOU MOVED UP TO MIDTOWN?!

SO I DID.

BUT I'M HERE TO SEE A CLIENT WHO JUST SO HAPPENS TO OWN THIS PLACE.

ANNND... I DON'T WANT TO INTERRUPT YOUR EVENING OUT WITH FRIENDS.

OH! EXCUSE ME, EVERYONE...THIS IS JIMMY SHAN, AN OLD... FRIEND FROM MY LAW CLERK DAYS, IN FACT.

WILL YOU ALL EXCUSE US FOR JUST A MOMENT?

UMM-HMMMM...

The awful part is that I had avoided coming down here since then. And for the very same reason that lay beneath Daddy's griping.

2

JIMMY...
I'M SORRY. I...
IT'S OKAY, DIAN.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO TAKE YOU BY SURPRISE. I SAW YOU AS SOON AS I CAME IN AND JUST COULDN'T RESIST.
IT DOES SEEM LIKE SUCH A LONG TIME...
FAR TOO LONG. BUT I'M AFRAID I MEANT WHAT I SAID ABOUT BEING HERE ON BUSINESS TONIGHT.
CALL ME SOMETIME.

I MISS YOU, DIAN
I--I WILL. GOODBYE, JIMMY.

WELLL... WE ARE ALL CERTAINLY WAITING...
SO, GIVE UP THE GOODS, GIRLIE.
ALL RIGHT, YES! WE... DATED FOR MOST OF THAT SUMMER I WAS HOME.
SOUNDS LIKE A HOT SUMMER.

WELL...
YOU'RE KIDDING.
WITH A CHINESE?!

YES, HE WAS DIFFERENT.
VERY PASSIONATE.

OKAY, SO SPILL. WHAT WAS IT LIKE?
WAS HE DIFFERENT? MORE... EXOTIC?
HE'S CANTONESE, SHELLY.
AND IF YOU MUST KNOW, TRISH...

IN FACT... I WOULD'VE THOUGHT HE WAS FRENCH.
;GASP;
WOO! WOO!!
OH, DIAN!!
(giggle)

It was only while teasing the gang that I realized the truth-- I had missed Jimmy, more than I cared to admit.

There have been a few other men in my life since then, but none quite like Jimmy.

Daddy hated him.

<GREETINGS, WU SUNG.>

<AND TO YOU. ZHANG CHAI LAO. PEACE TO THE LEI FENG AND ALL THEIR FAMILIES.>

<AND TO THE HUO YIBAI. THAT IS OUR INTENT, ANYHOW, IN ANSWERING YOUR SUMMONS.>

<AS IS OUR INTENT IN VOICING IT.>

<THERE IS A COMEDIAN, LING HOON, COUSIN TO A HIGH MAN IN THE LEI FENG. HE PERFORMS AT THE DOYER ST. THEATER?>

<HE IS HSU CHANG'S SECOND COUSIN.>

<YES.>

<AND HE'S GOT A BIG MOUTH.>

<THIS COMEDIAN HAS LEVELED HIS HUMOR AT US OF LATE, IF ONE CALLS SUCH GARBAGE HUMOR.>

<HE DISGRACES OUR WOMEN WITH FILTHY TALK. AND IMPLIES THAT OUR SERVICES ARE LESS THAN ADEQUATE. HIS INNUENDO IS BECOMING KNOWN IN EVERY HOUSEHOLD.>

<MY ELDERS HAVE INSTRUCTED ME TO SAY THIS COMEDIAN WILL BE REPRIMANDED. WE HAVE NO WISH TO BRING SHAME TO THE HUO YIBAI.>

<THINGS THAT ARE PAST, IT IS NEEDLESS TO BLAME.>

4

AHH... THANKS FOR COMING TONIGHT, EVERYONE. I REALLY NEEDED IT.

NO PROBLEM, DIAN.

YES, I LOVE CHINATOWN TOO, I MUST ADMIT. IT'S ALL JUST SO DIFFERENT AND QUAINT.

I DON'T LIKE BEING WHERE I CAN'T READ ANYTHING. GIVES ME THE WILLIES.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, DO YOU KNOW WHERE WE'RE STANDING?

THIS CORNER'S CALLED THE BLOODY ANGLE.

USED TO BE SAID MORE MURDERS WERE COMMITTED HERE THAN ANY OTHER SITE ON AMERICA-A- AAHH!

OH. DON'T BE SILLY. IT'S JUST ONE OF THOSE EXOTIC MASKS THEY MAKE. MUST BE THEIR NEW YEAR'S OR SOMETHING.

THEIRS IS *DIFFERENT* FROM OURS, YOU KNOW.

AND ABOUT TWICE AS OLD. CAROL, I WOULDN'T DISTURB THA--

OH, I WON'T HURT ANYTHIN- (gasp)!

Daddy told me to stay out of Chinatown.

THE FACE
ACT ONE

Of course, Daddy insisted on coming to pick me up at the scene himself. My friends had all been taken home, but I had to wait with the police.

COME, MY DEAR...

I'M HERE TO TAKE YOU OUT OF THIS HORRID PLACE.

FINALLY...

SO...YOU RECOGNIZE THIS, UHH...FACE?

HIM DRIVE TRUCK FOR LIL' SAM SUNG.

JUST A TRUCK DRIVER. UH? YEAH, MY ASS.

DADDY...?

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY POLICE HERE, TONIGHT? I COUNTED ALMOST TWENTY SQUAD CARS FOR A SINGLE HOMICIDE?

DIAN. PLEASE. GET IN THE CAR.

IT SEEMS THE PLACARD YOUR GRISLY DISCOVERY WAS MOUNTED ON BORE A NOTE CLAIMING THIS WAS AN ACT OF REVENGE ON THE HUO YIBAI COMMITTED BY THE LEI FENGS.

THE TONG FACTIONS?

THAT'S RIGHT. LUCKILY WE HAVEN'T SEEN ANY ACTION LIKE THIS IN YEARS -- SINCE JUST BEFORE YOU WERE BORN. BUT NOW...

OHHH. WHY CAN'T THESE PEOPLE MANAGE THEIR OWN AFFAIRS WITHOUT INVOLVING THE REST OF US?

THE LAW IS STILL A WHITE WORLD, DADDY.

NOW, DIAN...

--March 1: Here's what I mean about Daddy being funny. After being such a, yes, bigot about Orientals of late, tonight saw us attending a fund raiser for a new school in Chinatown.

MY FRIENDS, I AM YOUR HOST, HERMAN ROSS.

ENJOY THE FESTIVITIES!!

AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND SUPPORT TO SUCH A WORTHY CAUSE! I HOPE TO GREET EACH ONE OF YOU AS I PASS THROUGH THE CROWD, BUT UNTIL THEN...

HERMAN, NICE TO SEE YOU.

I THINK YOU'VE MET MY DAUGHTER, DIAN?

YES, OF COURSE, OF COURSE. SO GOOD OF YOU BOTH TO COME AND SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE ORIENTAL COMMUNITY.

IT'S OUR PLEASURE, MR. ROSS.

MAY BE YOUR PLEASURE, M'DEAR; BUT YOUR FATHER THINKS I NEVER NOTICED THAT HIS NAME WASN'T ON OUR GUEST LIST TILL SEVERAL DAYS AGO.

DOESN'T MATTER, WE'LL TAKE SUPPORT ANYWHERE WE CAN FIND IT! HAW, HAW!

Daddy had claimed his attendance was at the mayor's request--public relations, especially now.

WELL, I, UM...

HERMAN!

I NEED YOU TO POINT THAT GLAD HAND IN THIS DIRECTION FOR A WHILE.

MEET WESLEY DODDS.

MR. DODDS IS VERY INTERESTED IN PATRONIZING OUR SCHOOL.

MR. ROSS.

THAT'S WONDERFUL, BENSON!

SO, MY WILY PARTNER'S ROPED YOU INTO THE GOOD FIGHT--EH, DODDS? WE APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT!

ALWAYS READY TO HELP, SIR. I BELIEVE YOU KNEW MY FATHER?

EDWARD DODDS?

WELL, I CERTAINLY DID! SERVED IN THE GREAT WAR WITH HIM! I WAS SORRY TO HEAR HE'D PASSED AWAY.

A CHARITABLE MAN.

I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, DIAN.

HE'D BE PROUD TO SEE THAT THE TRADITION'S LIVED ON. EH?

THANK YOU, SIR.

GOT YOUR HOOKS IN ANOTHER ONE, HERMAN?

CAREFUL, MY FRIEND...

A PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO HERMAN ROSS WILL LEAVE YOUR BANK ACCOUNT FEELING EMPTY.

JIMMY, M'BOY!

HOW ARE YOU? HOW ARE YOU?

VERY WELL, THANKS. AND HOW GOES THE DRIVE FOR OUR SCHOOL?

SMOOTHER THANKS TO YOUR HELP. JIMMY SHAN, HERE, HELPED ARRANGE THE PURCHASE OF OUR SCHOOL BUILDING! OH, THIS IS WESLEY DO...

I KNOW MISS BELMONT ALREADY.

HELLO AGAIN, JIMMY.

I HEARD ABOUT THE OTHER NIGHT, CALL ME.

LOOKS GOOD, HERMAN.

BE SPEAKING TO YOU SOON. EVENING, MR...?

DODDS.

CERTAINLY, M'BOY.

WELL, I'M OFF TO WORK THIS CROWD MYSELF.

GOOD EVENING, EVERY-ONE.

SO THEN, MR. WESLEY DODDS... LONG TIME NO SEE.

HOW'VE YOU BEE-- UH...WESLEY?

WES!

WES, WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG? YOU WERE... STARING AFTER JIMMY. HE'S JUST AN OLD FRIEND.

I... DIDN'T THINK THAT WOULD BOTHER YOU...

YOU MEAN BECAUSE HE'S CANTONESE?!

DIAN, I ALL BUT GREW UP IN THE ORIENT. IN CERTAIN WAYS YOU APPEAR STRANGER TO ME THAN ANY ASIAN WOULD.

OH.

WELL... IT'S JUST THAT YOU WERE RATHER QUIET EARLIER AND THEN...

WELL, JIMMY DOES COME ON STRONG AT TIMES.

I MERELY THOUGHT I RECOGNIZED HIM AND I WAS TRYING TO RECALL FROM WHERE.

10

CATHERINE? STILL SPENDING TIME IN THE COUNTRY MAINLY. I SAW HER AROUND A WEEK AGO AND SHE LOOKED MUCH BETTER.

BUT IT *IS* NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN--AND UNDER BETTER CIRCUMSTANCES. HOW IS YOUR FRIEND DOING?

GOOD TO HEAR. THE SOONER SHE CAN FORGET THAT DREADFUL BUSINESS THE BETTER.

AND SO, WOULD YOU CARE TO JOIN ME FOR A DRINK?

YOU? DRINK?

I FIGURE THE PUNCH BOWL AT A *SCHOOL* CHARITY BALL HAS A DECENT CHANCE OF REMAINING *UN*-SPIKED.

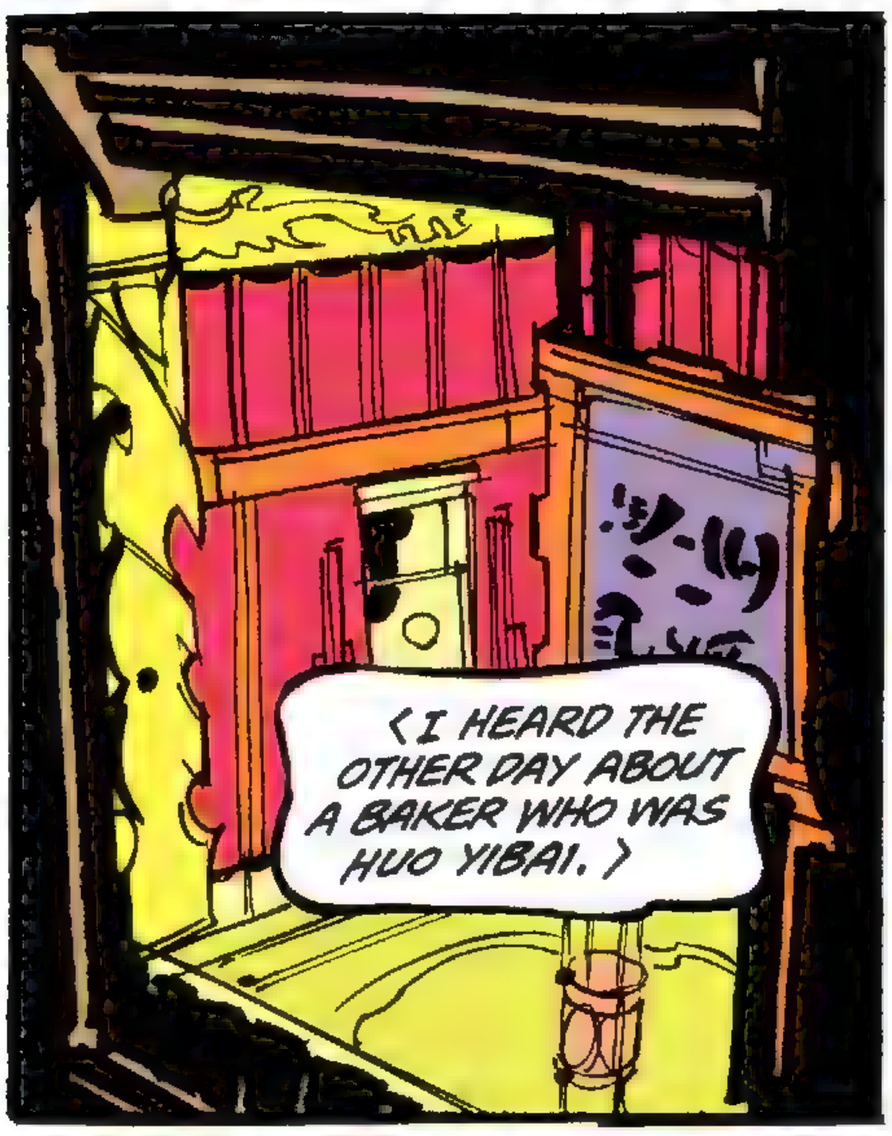
UH-UH. GUESS AGAIN, YOU DESERT.

GROOOAN-- MAYBE JUST A SELTZER, THEN.

Still shaken from seeing Jimmy twice in such a short time period, I spent most of the evening with Wesley Dodds.

He's a very serious sort, but also relaxed and confident in his own way. Says he's a dreamer. I believe it.

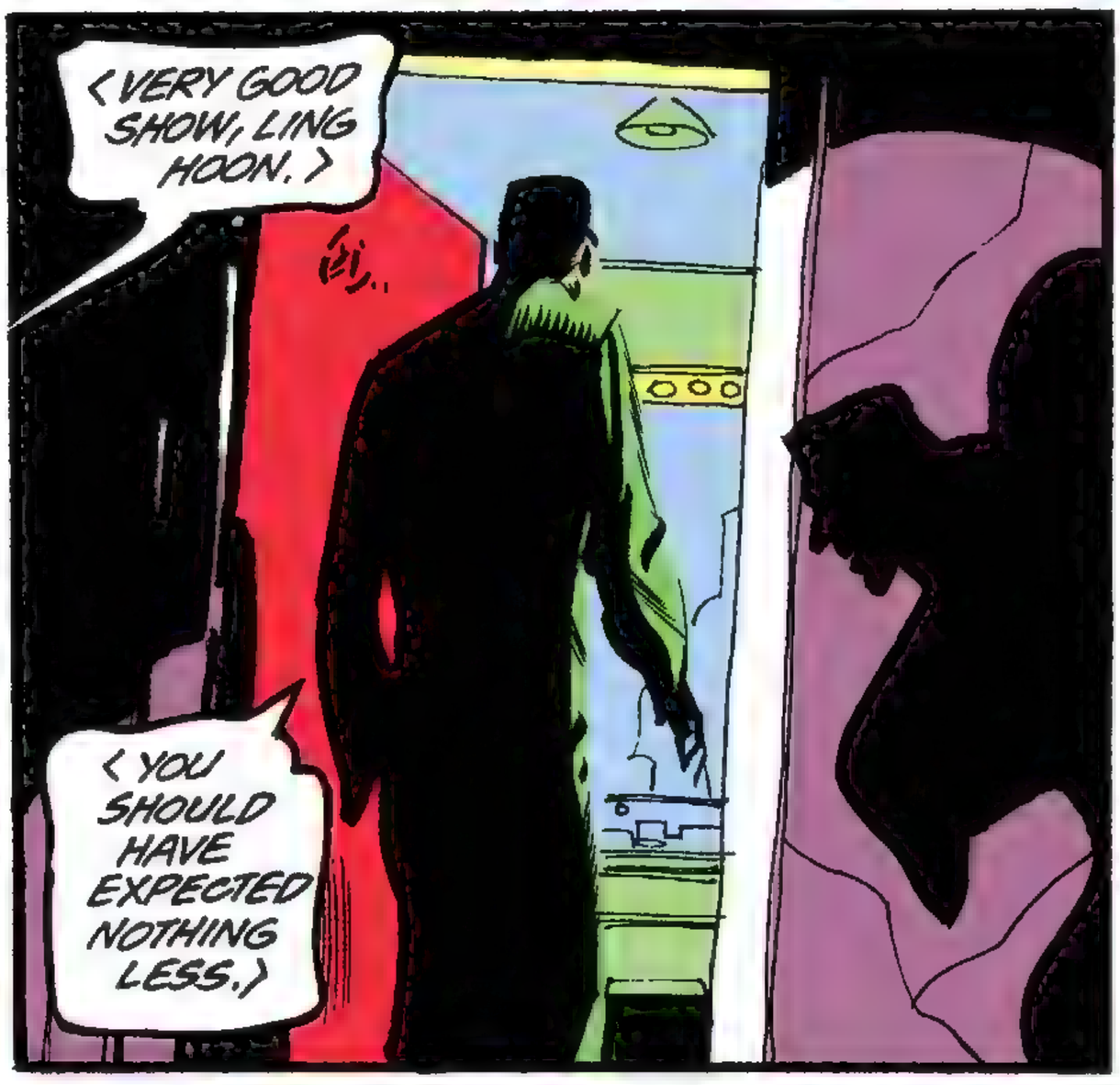
Funny thing. Daddy somehow managed to avoiding running into Jimmy even once all evening long. Imagine that.


〈I HEARD THE OTHER DAY ABOUT A BAKER WHO WAS HUO YIBAI.〉

〈HE COULDN'T MAKE HIS DOUGH TO RISE IN THE MORNING...〉
〈...AND SO HIS LOAF HAD GONE FLAT BY THE NIGHT!〉

〈OR SO HIS WIFE IS SAID TO CLAIM...〉

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP


〈VERY GOOD SHOW, LING HOON.〉
〈YOU SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED NOTHING LESS.〉

KNOCK KNOCK
〈WHO IS IT?〉

〈LAUNDRY, SIR.
〈YOU ARE LATE! I WANTED THAT DELIVERED BEFORE MY PERFORMANCE TONIGHT.〉

〈I KNOW, SIR. SO SORRY, SIR.〉
〈SEE THAT YOU ARE MORE CAREFUL NEXT TIME.〉
12

<I AM A GREAT COMEDIAN, YOU KNOW. AND MY APPEARANCE IS PART OF MY SUCCESS.>

THAK

<YES, SIR. I REALIZE THAT, SIR.>

<YOU SEE...>

<I KNOW ALL ABOUT APPEARANCES AND SUCH.>

KNOCK-KNOCK--

YES, COME IN?

All in all, the evening had left me with a strange feeling of resolve.

JUST ME.

More than ever, I was determined to go see Jimmy on my own again.

I WANTED TO SAY GOOD NIGHT AND THANKS FOR JOINING ME THIS EVENING. I DO HATE HAVING TO DO PUBLICITY STINTS FOR CITY HALL SOMETIMES.

YOU'RE WELCOME, DADDY. GOOD NIGHT.

Suddenly, it felt like part of me was missing.

<("GENTLEMEN, PLACE YOUR BETS.")>

<("FIFTY AND RAISE YOU THIRTY.")>

<("SEVENTY-FIVE ON THE RED.")>

<("FOR YOU, HANDSOME, ONLY TEN.")>

<("BLACK SEVENTEEN.")>

<("TWENTY-ONE!")>

<("EIGHT, NINE, TWENTY THOUSAND.")>

<FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE...>

<...TWENTY-ONE THOUSAND. FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE...>

<...TWENTY-TWO THOUSAND.

<FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT...>

KLUNK

<UHN.>

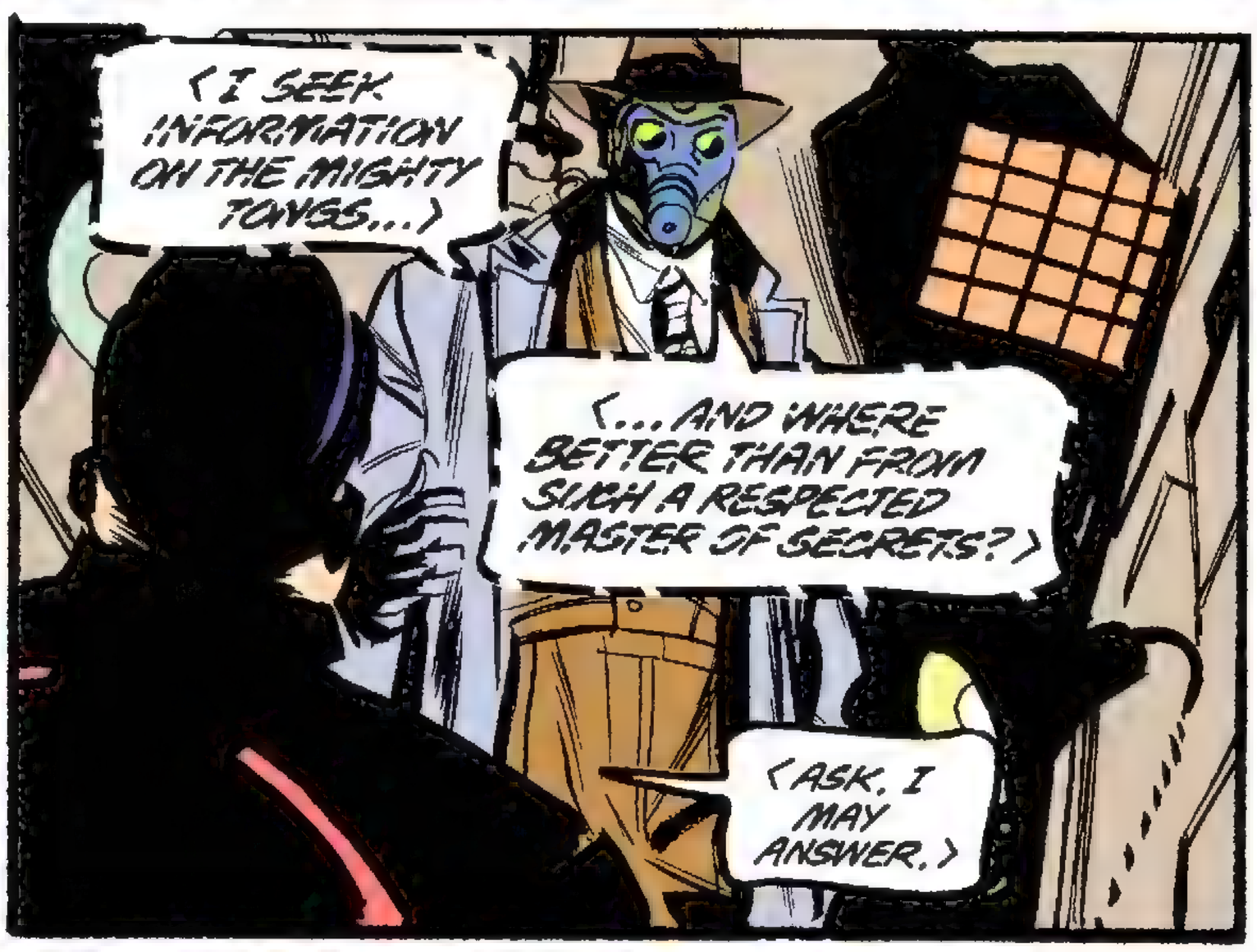
<NINE-- THE ROOF. TWENTY-THREE THOUSAND. FIVE, SIX, SEVEN...>

14

〈THIRTY THOUSAND.〉
〈THAT WAS FAST. FIND ANYTHING? FIVE, SIX, SEV--〉
〈YES.〉

〈I HAVE FOUND ONE WHO MIGHT HAVE THE ANSWERS I SEEK. YOU ARE MASTER BEI?〉

〈MY HOUSE IS WELL-KNOWN IN SOME CIRCLES AND MY FACE, AS YOU CAN SEE, IS UNMASKED.〉


〈I SEEK INFORMATION ON THE MIGHTY TONGS...〉
〈...AND WHERE BETTER THAN FROM SUCH A RESPECTED MASTER OF SECRETS?〉
〈ASK. I MAY ANSWER.〉

〈WHY IS THERE SUCH VIOLENCE IN THE AIR?〉
〈NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW.〉
〈THE BOY WHOSE HEAD THEY FOUND WAS MUO YIBAI BUT THE LEI FENG DENY KILLING HIM.〉
15

〈THERE WAS A NOTE.〉
〈A FORGERY.〉
〈THE LEI FENG LEADERS HAVE MANAGED TO CONVINCE WU SUNG OF THAT, BUT ONLY JUST. THE SITUATION IS HOT.〉

〈WHO STANDS TO BENEFIT THE MOST FROM SUCH A WAR?〉
〈NO ONE, REALLY. THE OTHER SOCIETIES ARE NOT STRONG ENOUGH.〉
〈THEN WHO IS BEHIND IT ALL? WHO DID THE KILLING?
〈THIS IS NOT KNOWN.〉
〈IN FACT, MAYBE IT WAS SOMEONE OUTSIDE OF CHINATOWN.〉
〈A STRANGER AMONGST US--DISGUISED, PERHAPS. MAYBE, SOMEONE LIKE...〉
〈... YOU!!〉
〈THIS ONE THANKS MASTER BE! FOR HIS HONESTY, IF NOT FOR HIS SUSPICIONS.
〈KOFF-HACK!! LING HO, COME AT ONCE!!〉
〈NOTHING ON THE ROOF, BOSS-- WHAT?! IS IT A FIRE?!!〉
〈HACK! HACK!!〉
〈NO--KOFFF, KOFFF!! G-GET... GET HIM...HACK! HACK! HACK!〉
〈WHO?--;COFF, COFF, HACK! HACK!〉
16

BZZZZ

HELLO, JIMMY.

DIAN!

I DIDN'T EXPECT TO HEAR FROM YOU SO.., EASILY.

PLEASE, COME IN.

I'M A BIT SURPRISED MYSELF.

THIS IS A NICE PLACE YOU HAVE.

IT'S OKAY.

I KNOW THE BUILDING'S NOT EXACTLY THE RITZ.

BUT I'VE FIXED THIS APARTMENT UP AND IT'S CERTAINLY BETTER THAN ANY-THING MY PARENTS EVER HAD. PLEASE, HAVE A SEAT.

CARE FOR A DRINK?

IN A BIT. SO... HOW ARE THINGS?

VERY WELL. I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH MY UNCLE'S FAMILY FOR QUITE SOME TIME NOW.

MY LAW TRAINING COMES IN HANDY BUT SO FAR IT HASN'T BEEN NECESSARY TO SIT FOR THE BAR.

YOUR UNCLE'S FAMILY... ARE THEY A "TONG"?

OH, DIAN... SUCH ANTIQUATED TERMS YOU USE. TONGS ARE REALLY A THING OF THE PAST. THIS IS MORE OF A MUTUAL AID SOCIETY.

RING! RING!

RATHER LIKE A UNION. OH... EXCUSE ME.

17

HELLO?

HERMAN! YES, GOOD TO HEAR FROM YOU,

YES, WE COULD MEET THIS AFTERNOON TO DISCUSS THOSE DETAILS... CERTAINLY... I WILL...

BZZZZZ

PACKAGE FOR MR. SHAN?

HE'S ON THE PHONE. I'LL TAKE IT, THANKS.

SEE YOU THEN, HERMAN...

WHAT'S THIS?

A PARCEL FOR YOU.

SHOPPING SEARS & ROEBUCK THESE DAYS, JIMMY?

NO... WHAT COULD THIS BE?

YOU'RE QUITE IN-VOLVED WITH THAT NEW SCHOOL, AREN'T YOU?

IF MY PEOPLE ARE TO LIVE IN THIS COUNTRY, THEY MUST LEARN ALL THEY CAN FROM IT.

THIS IS THE FIRST STEP TO GETTING A--

...AHEA--

JIMMY, WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT'S IN THE BO-

I MUST GET READY TO MEET MESSRS. ROSS AND BENSON FOR LUNCH, NOW, DIAN.

HOW ABOUT DINNER FRIDAY NIGHT?

UMM... FINE.

GOOD! CALL ME TOMORROW?

Y-YES, OF COURSE.

GOOD. GOOD! SEE YOU THEN!

18

...F'I DI'NT KNOOOOW, WHA I DI'NT KNOOOOW-- HIC-- DEN I WOO'NT KNOOOOW, WHA I WOO'NT KNOWWWW...

:HIC:

CUTE. YOU ARE LATE AGAIN...

AND YOU SMELL.

NO, YOU SMELL. I STINK--GOD-DAMN ILLITERATE FLUNKY.

BUT HE'S RIGHT. YOU ARE LATE.

SO WHAT?

SO YOU HAVE TO SIT ON YOUR FAT ASS IN HERE AN EXTRA HALF-HOUR WHILE BRUISER-BOY HAS TO WAIT OUT IN THE COLD DARK ALLEY? OOO, MY MASCARA'S RUNNIN'.

YOU GOT WHAT YOU PAID FOR.

TRUE ENOUGH.

AND NOW WE MUST WAIT FOR RESULTS. LIE LOW UNTIL THEN. HAVE SOME FUN. BUT STAY IN TOWN A WHILE LONGER.

THERE SHALL BE MORE WORK FOR YOU.

THERE'S ALWAYS WORK WITH MEN LIKE YOU AROUND, FAT ASS.

SEE YOU THEN.

I WILL CONTACT YOU BY THE NORMAL MEANS.

UH-HUH.

LET'S GO, DRIVER.

WELL, WELL, WELL...

WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

<I'VE GOT WHAT ANY SLUT LIKE YOU IS AFTER.>

<BUT HAVE YOU GOT WHAT I NEED TONIGHT?>

I GOT IT ALL, I DO IT ALL, BABY. FIVE BUCKS.

<SOLD.>

<LIAN.>

THEN, FOLLOW ME... WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

HOTEL

FACE? GOOFY NAME. BUT YOU LOOK FINE TO ME, HANDSOME.

UH-HUH.

WHAT'S UP?

FOLDIN' YOUR CLOTHES? SAY, AIN'T YOU A NEAT ONE? COME ON, LET'S GO ALREADY.

<I LIKE THINGS TO BE IN THEIR PROPER PLACE.>

<YOU'LL SEE.>

OHH, NO, NO, NO...

SHUT UP.

NO, WAIT-A-MINUTE, JUNIOR!

I'LL SCREAM! I MEAN IT--

20

;SOB-SOB-SOB-SOB;

B-B-BASTARD...

;SOB-SOB-SOB-SOB;

<HOW MUCH DID WE SAY, AGAIN?>

BASTARD!

Y-YOU T-TORE ME UP! I-I'LL B-BE WORTHLESS--

AGGHHH--

<WORTH? I'D SAY TEN CENTS AT BEST.>

GET OUT! YOU MONSTER!! YOU BASTARD, GET OUT!!

<NOW, NOW... NOTHING TO LOSE YOUR PRETTY HEAD ABOUT.>

WHAT IS IT?!

WHAT'S IT SAY?!

IT'S A DECLARATION OF WAR-- BY THE LEI FENG!

KNOCK KNOCK

YES?

I had spent the rest of the afternoon idling in and out of shops. Trying to forget about Jimmy's odd behavior.

HI, DADDY! JUST THOUGHT I'D SEE IF YOU WANTED TO HAVE DINN-

OH!... I'M SORRY.

LIEUTENANT. GENTLEMEN.

MA'AM.

MISS BELMONT.

NO, I'M AFRAID I'LL BE RATHER LATE AGAIN, DEAR. THERE'S BEEN SOME FURTHER TONG ACTIVITY.

BUT I HAD HEARD THAT THE TONGS WERE REALLY NO LONGER ACTIVE. THAT THEY--

WHERE ON EARTH DID YOU EVER HEAR THAT?!

PROBABLY SOME OF HERMAN ROSS'S HOOEY.

WELL, TWO HORRIBLE MURDERS AND A PUBLICLY POSTED CHALLENGE HAVE LEFT US ALL DOWNTOWN FINDING THE TONGS ALL TOO REAL.

NOW, BE A DARLING AND PROMISE ME YOU'LL TAKE A CAB HOME FROM HERE, YES?

WELL, AT... THE OTHER NIGHT, AT THE CHARITY BALL.

22

Not bad enough being turned down and ushered out by two men in one day... but who'd believe three?!

WELL, NOW, FANCY MEETING YOU HERE, STRANGER!

HMM... OH, HELLO, DIAN?

VISITING YOUR FATHER?

THAT'S RIGHT, HE'S WORKING LATE.

ACTUALLY, I WAS LOOKING FOR A DINNER COMPANION.

WHAT DO YOU SAY? CARE TO JOIN ME?

BOY, I'D LOVE TO BUT I CAN'T. I HAVE TO WORK LATE TONIGHT MYSELF. IN FACT, I WAS JUST CHECKING SOME PROPERTY RECORDS AT THE COURTHOUSE.

(groooaan) ARE ALL MEN SUCH TERRIBLE WORK-HORSES?

SOME OF US. THE OTHERS HAVE NO IMAGINATION.

BUT, LISTEN, WE DO SEEM TO HAVE A HABIT OF STRAYING INTO EACH OTHER. SO I'LL TAKE A RAIN CHECK ON THAT DINNER. OKAY?

(sigh) OKAY. WELL, UNTIL THEN...

GOOD NIGHT, DIAN.

Wesley's enterprise was the same quality that had eventually come between Jimmy and me (even more than Daddy). They are both just so damn <u>driven</u> in life. Why have I never had such definite goals?

Of the two, though, Wesley is the more mysterious. I don't really think Jimmy <u>has</u> much imagination, only desire (and plenty of that).

Wesley continually says he has dreams.

23

DC VERTIGO

$2.95 US

$3.95 CAN

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

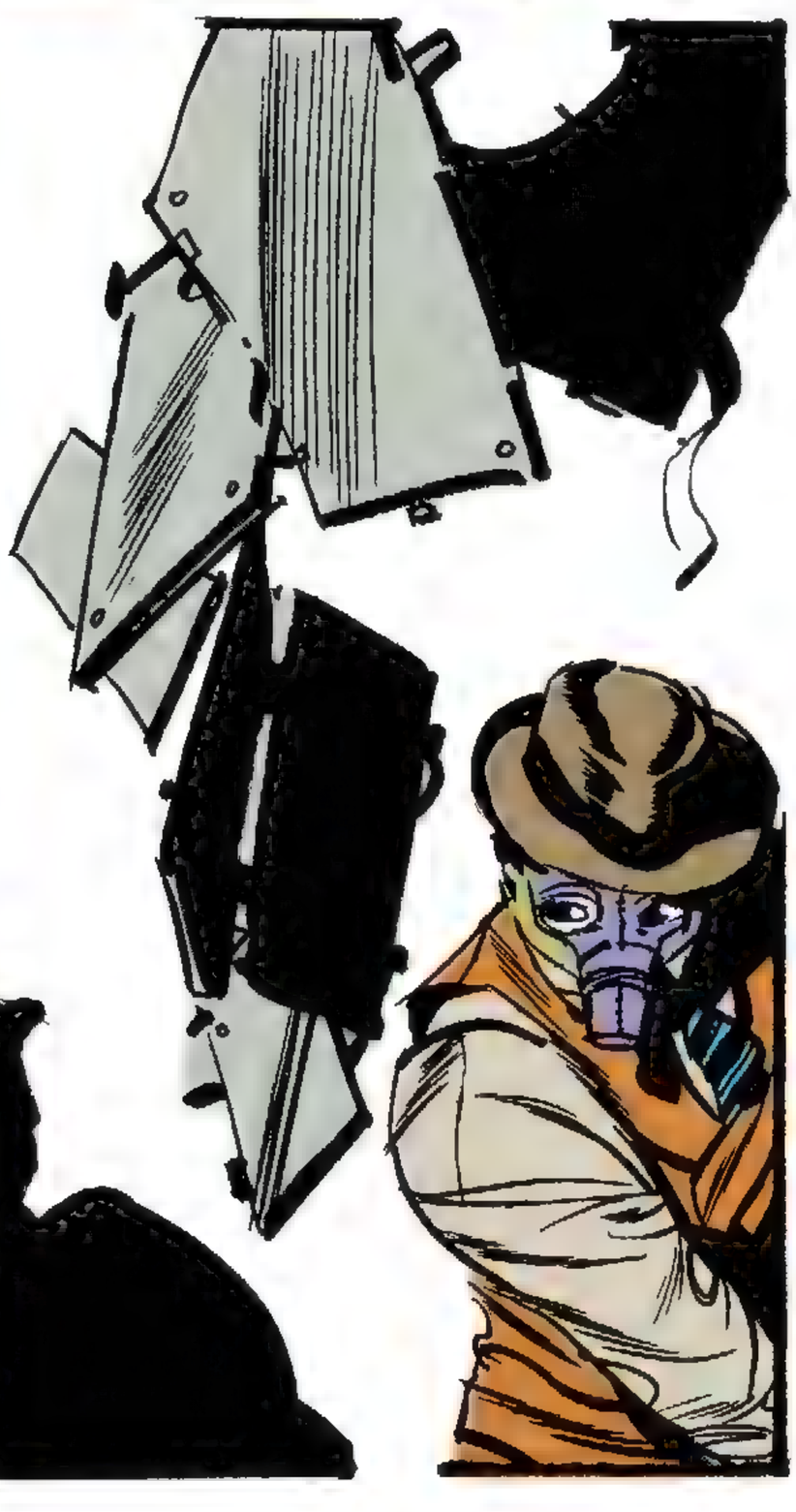
by Matt Wagner & John Watkiss

"...the blade bit deeply into the soft flesh of the throat, snapping the gristly tendons."

THE FACE

2 OF 4

THAK!



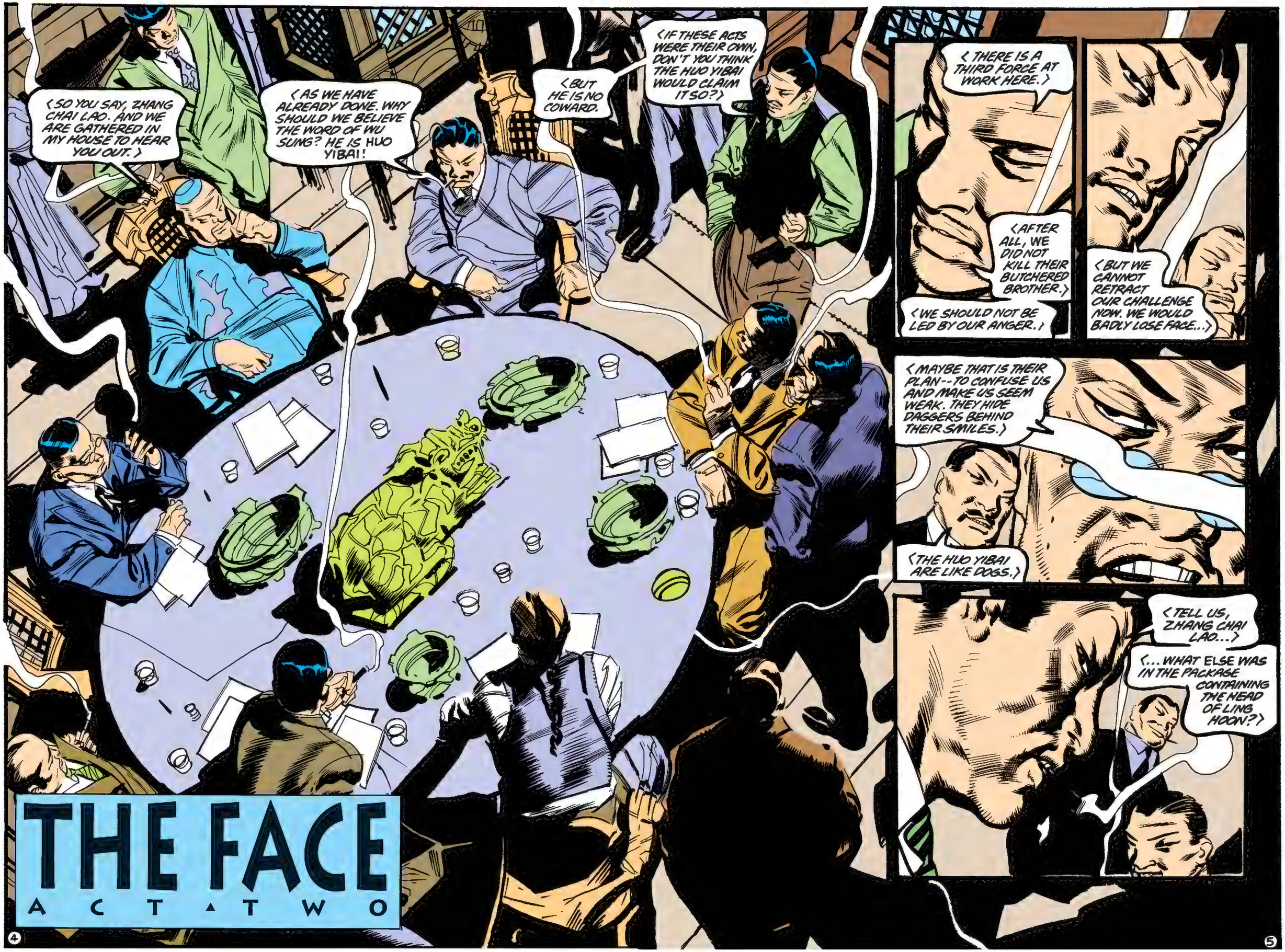
KLAK-ANGGG!

<KOFF!>

<HACK! KOFF!>

FOOSH!

<THE HUO YIBAI ARE INNOCENT. OUR WAR STANCE AGAINST THEM IS UNFOUNDED.>


〈SO YOU SAY, ZHANG CHAI LAO. AND WE ARE GATHERED IN MY HOUSE TO HEAR YOU OUT.〉
〈AS WE HAVE ALREADY DONE. WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE THE WORD OF WU SUNG? HE IS HUO YIBAI!
〈BUT HE IS NO COWARD.
〈IF THESE ACTS WERE THEIR OWN, DON'T YOU THINK THE HUO YIBAI WOULD CLAIM IT SO?〉
THE FACE
ACT TWO
4
〈THERE IS A THIRD FORCE AT WORK HERE.〉
〈AFTER ALL, WE DID NOT KILL THEIR BUTCHERED BROTHER.〉
〈WE SHOULD NOT BE LED BY OUR ANGER.〉
〈BUT WE CANNOT RETRACT OUR CHALLENGE NOW. WE WOULD BADLY LOSE FACE...〉
〈MAYBE THAT IS THEIR PLAN--TO CONFUSE US AND MAKE US SEEM WEAK. THEY HIDE DAGGERS BEHIND THEIR SMILES.〉
〈THE HUO YIBAI ARE LIKE DOGS.〉
〈TELL US, ZHANG CHAI LAO...〉
〈...WHAT ELSE WAS IN THE PACKAGE CONTAINING THE HEAD OF LING HOON?〉
5

〈THE--UH... HE--〉
〈HIS...HIS TESTICLES WERE STUFFED INTO THE MOUTH.〉
〈BUT--〉
〈AND THEY HAD ALREADY COMPLAINED ABOUT HIS JOKES!
〈HSU CHANG, THIS MAN WAS YOUR COUSIN!〉
〈IS THERE ANY DOUBT HE WAS MURDERED BY OUR ENEMIES?〉
〈LING HOON'S HUMOR WAS VULGAR. PERHAPS HIS ENEMIES ARE NOT OUR OWN-- EH?〉
〈WHAT?!〉
〈DEATH TO THE HUO YIBAI!!〉
〈HONORED GUESTS, HERE IS EVIL NEWS. AN INTRUDER HAS BEEN DRIVEN OFF WHILE SPYING ON THIS MEETING!!〉
〈THEY HAVE INVADED MY VERY HOUSE!!〉
〈THEY WILL LIE IN RUINOUS DEFEAT!!
Jimmy always said his people's history was a mixture of rage in the name of order...
And death in the name of pride.
6

SO, CAROL, WHAT'S NEW AND EXCITING IN YOUR LIFE?

TOO MANY HANGOVERS AND NOT ENOUGH MEN.

I finally found an evening partner in Carol Swanson. I now realize that this was an effort not to think about Jimmy. Capricious and vain, she is unlike him in almost every way.

OR, I SHOULD SAY, NOT ENOUGH GOOD ONES. YOU STILL SEEING THE CHINAMAN?

WELL... NOT REALLY. BUT WE DO HAVE A DATE THIS FRIDAY NIGHT.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DO IT, SISTER. I LIKE MINE WHITE. WHITE AND HANDSOME. POWERFUL'S GOOD, TOO.

LIKE ROBERT MONTGOMERY...

TO EACH HER OWN, CAROL.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE PALAIS ROYALE IS PROUD TO BRING YOU THE SWINGING SOUNDS OF--

--THE ARTIE SHAW BAND! C'MON ALL YOU "JITTER-BUGGERS!"

GOOD GOD...

LOOK AT THEM GO.

AS IF I NEED ANOTHER REASON TO FEEL ANY OLDER.

WHERE DO THEY GET THE ENERGY? I MEAN I'VE SEEN THIS TYPE OF THING IN HARLEM...

...BUT *THERE* IT ALWAYS FEELS SO FUN--SO FREE.

HERE, ALL THE ACROBATICS JUST SEEM SO...

...DESPERATE.

As I gazed at the dancers, I couldn't help feeling ashamed. Wasn't I guilty of the same frivolity, after all?

Don't I really know what I glimpsed inside that box at Jimmy's.

9

CLICK

LARRY, IRVING... I'VE CALLED YOU HERE TONIGHT TO TALK ABOUT THIS SITUATION IN CHINATOWN.

THIS THING'S A POWDER KEG, AND I WANT IT CORKED.

I DON'T NEED THIS SHIT RIGHT NOW, SO... COMMISSIONER DAVIS, I WANT THREE TIMES THE POLICE PRESENCE ON THE STREETS IMMEDIATELY.

HAUL IN *ANYONE* SUSPECTED OF TONG ACTIVITY.

YOU GOT IT, MR. MAYOR.

AND, DISTRICT ATTORNEY, I NEED YOU TO MAKE AT LEAST SOME OF THESE CHARGES STICK. AND HURT.

I MUST SAY, YOU SEEM RATHER QUIET ABOUT THE WHOLE MESS.

WASN'T IT YOUR DAUGHTER WHO FOUND THAT GODDAMN HEAD?

YES, SIMPLY BARBARIC.

I JUST FIND THE ENTIRE AFFAIR SUCH A PATHETIC NUISANCE. IF THESE PEOPLE INSIST ON CUTTING EACH OTHER TO RIBBONS...

...WHY DON'T THEY JUST STAY IN THEIR OWN DAMN COUNTRY?

11

LIKE THE ITALIANS AND THE IRISH? WE'RE A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS, LARRY.

PERSONALLY, I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ANYBODY'S INTERNAL STRIFE. I JUST DON'T WANT ANY BLOOD IN MY STREETS.

NO MATTER *WHO'S* DOIN' THE BLEEDIN'.

NEED I POINT OUT THAT THIS SORT OF CIVIL UNREST LOOKS BAD FOR ALL OF US?

ESPECIALLY *YOU*, WHO'S UP FOR RE-ELECTION NEXT YEAR.

VERY WELL THEN.

COMMISSIONER--

--YOU JUST GET THEM BEHIND BARS AND MY OFFICE WILL DO ALL IT CAN TO KEEP THEM THERE. NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES.

GOOD ENOUGH.

GENTLEMEN... IT'S NICE TO SEE WE'RE ALL IN AGREEMENT ON THIS. NOW, WILL YOU BOTH JOIN ME FOR A WHISKEY?

12

HELLO, JIMMY. IT'S DIAN. I'M... SORRY TO BE CALLING SO LATE.

I HOPE I DIDN'T WAKE YOU.

NOT AT ALL, DIAN. I HAD SOME LATE BUSINESS THIS EVENING.

BUT THIS MAKES TWICE IN ONE DAY THAT WE SPEAK.

I'M GETTING SPOILED.

WELL THEN, HOW'S THIS? I'M CALLING TO SEE IF WE CAN RE-ARRANGE OUR DINNER PLANS. HOW'S TOMORROW NIGHT INSTEAD OF FRIDAY? SAY, EIGHT O'CLOCK AT THE WALDORF? MY TREAT.

HA. YOU *ARE* A TREAT, DIAN.

EIGHT IT IS. AND I'LL BE COUNTING THE HOURS.

DIAN, WH--?

MARVELOUS! I'LL SEE YOU THEN!

OH, HELLO, DADDY. I DIDN'T HEAR YOU COME IN.

I HAD A MEETING WITH THE MAYOR. WHO WERE YOU CALLING THIS LATE AT NIGHT?

OH, JUST MAKING PLANS FOR TOMORROW NIGHT. I HAVE A DATE...

13

...WITH JIMMY SHAN.

IN CHINATOWN?!

ABSOLUTELY NOT!! NOT WITH ALL THIS...YELLOW WARFARE GOING ON--

DADDY, WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT CHINATOWN?

JIMMY LIVES NOT FAR FROM HERE, NOW.

AND WE'RE GOING TO THE WALDORF. I THINK YOU'LL AGREE IT'S SAFE ENOUGH.

WELLLL... I STILL DON'T LIKE IT.

THAT YOUNG MAN'S A SHADY CHARACTER! HE COULD EVEN BE INVOLVED IN ALL THIS DIRTY BUSINESS. BUT...YOU'D PROBABLY FIND THAT EXCITING.

OH, GO AHEAD AND JUST DO WHATEVER YOU WANT TO, DIAN...

IT SEEMS YOU ALWAYS DO!

NOW, DADDY...

14

FINE, THEN.

I wouldn't have been so mad if he wasn't right. Jimmy might be involved. I had to know.

TO DIAN. WHOSE BEAUTY IS MATCHED ONLY BY... WELL, BY NOTHING I CAN THINK OF.

JIMMY... YOU KNOW IT TAKES MORE THAN FLATTERY TO MAKE ME BLUSH. AND *CERTAINLY* MORE THAN ONE GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE.

I REMEMBER WHAT MAKES YOU BLUSH...VERY WELL.

SCOUNDREL.

WELL, NOW, IF *THIS* ISN'T A LUCKY COINCIDENCE! GOOD EVENING, DIAN.

JIMMY, MIGHT I STEAL YOU AWAY FOR JUST A MOMENT ...IMPORTANT DETAILS.

MR. ROSS...

WHY, OF COURSE, HERMAN.

DIAN, YOU WON'T MIND?

NO. GO RIGHT AHEAD.

It seemed fate was conspiring to keep me from ever being too close to Jimmy again.

WELL HELLO AGAIN, "*STRANGER!*"

IT SEEMS THIS REALLY *IS* BECOMING A HABIT.

WESLEY! WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?

15

WHY, OUR RUNNING INTO EACH OTHER, OF COURSE.

OH! YES...YES, IT CERTAINLY IS. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE TONIGHT?

ON A DATE?

HA. NOT ON MY SCHEDULE.

NO, I'M MEETING AN OLD COLLEAGUE OF MY FATHER'S FOR DINNER. HE'S A PROFESSOR OF EASTERN STUDIES AT COLUMBIA AND GIVES ME ADVICE ON OUR FOREIGN MARKETS FROM TIME TO TIME. YOU?

WELL, I AM ON A DA--SPEAK OF THE DEVIL!

JIMMY SHAN... WESLEY DODDS.

I BELIEVE WE'VE MET BEFORE...?

ALMOST. BUT I DON'T WISH TO INTRUDE. I'LL LEAVE YOU BOTH TO ENJOY YOUR EVENING.

GOOD NIGHT, ALL.

SERIOUS FELLOW.

HE CAN BE.

SORRY TO ABANDON YOU LIKE THAT. I KNOW HERMAN CAN BE RATHER ABRUPT.

OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT. JUST SO LONG AS YOU'RE REALLY MINE FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT.

FOR AS LONG AS YOU LIKE. UNTIL TOMORROW, EVEN.

WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT...

16

COTTON CLUB

EXTRA! EXTRA!

GETCHA PAPAH! NIGHT-OWL DISHUN! GETCHA PAPUH!

AH TAKE WUN.

HEAH. HEAH. AH SAY AH TAKE WUN.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

BLOW, BO.' YOU JINXIN' ALL MY BIZNESS. SCRAM!

AH SAED AH WAN A PAPUH! HEAH D'MONEY.

MAN, GET D-FUH-- YYAAH!

GIVE THE MAN HIS PAPER, BOY.

AND YOU KEEP YOUR ASS AWAY FROM HERE, TOM.

17

FACE--Another delivery needed A.S.A.P. Payment has been sent.

LOOKIN' FOR A DATE, EH?

HATE TO SAY IT, JUNIOR, BUT I ONLY DO HEAD.

ONE FOR FRENCH. THREE FOR GREEK.

OH, IT'S YOU. THE ROWDY ONE WITH HIS BIG STRONG ROPES.

IT'S 'CAUSE OF YOU, I'M ON MY KNEES THESE DAYS, BUSTER! WELL, I AIN'T OPEN FOR Y--

HEY.

HEY, BACK OFF!! I--

THIS ONE'S ON SOMEONE ELSE'S TAB.

18

At dinner, Jimmy managed to avoid any attempt I made at digging for dirt on the Tongs. Still, frustrated as I was, there's just no denying that charm sometimes.

HIS sense of pleasure is so infectious.

THANKS, JIMMY. THAT WAS REALLY DELIGHTFUL.

IT'S THE DELIGHT I FEEL FROM SEEING YOU AGAIN. AND I...I WISH IT DIDN'T HAVE TO END HERE.

JIMMY, I...

EVENINGS WITH YOU WERE ALWAYS MAGICAL, DIAN. I MISS YOUR FRAGRANCE. YOUR SKIN.

OKAY.

HUH?!

EXCUSE M-- SAY!!

DIAN! WHAT--WHAT IS THIS?!

GOOD EVENING, SIR. NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

SORRY IF WE... DISTURBED YOU.

WHY, YOU...

19

DADDY!

WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?! WHY ARE YOU RUSHING OUT AT THIS LATE HOUR OF NIGHT?

HMM...? WHY, THERE'S BEEN ANOTHER TONG KILLING, THAT'S WHY. THIS TIME IT WAS A PROSTITUTE.

HER HEADLESS BODY WAS DIS-COVERED AN HOUR AGO.

I DO HOPE YOU PLAN ON STAYING HOME NOW TONIGHT...

ALONE.

WISE ADVICE--AS WELL AS MY CUE TO SAY, "GOOD NIGHT." I'LL CALL YOU SOON, DIAN.

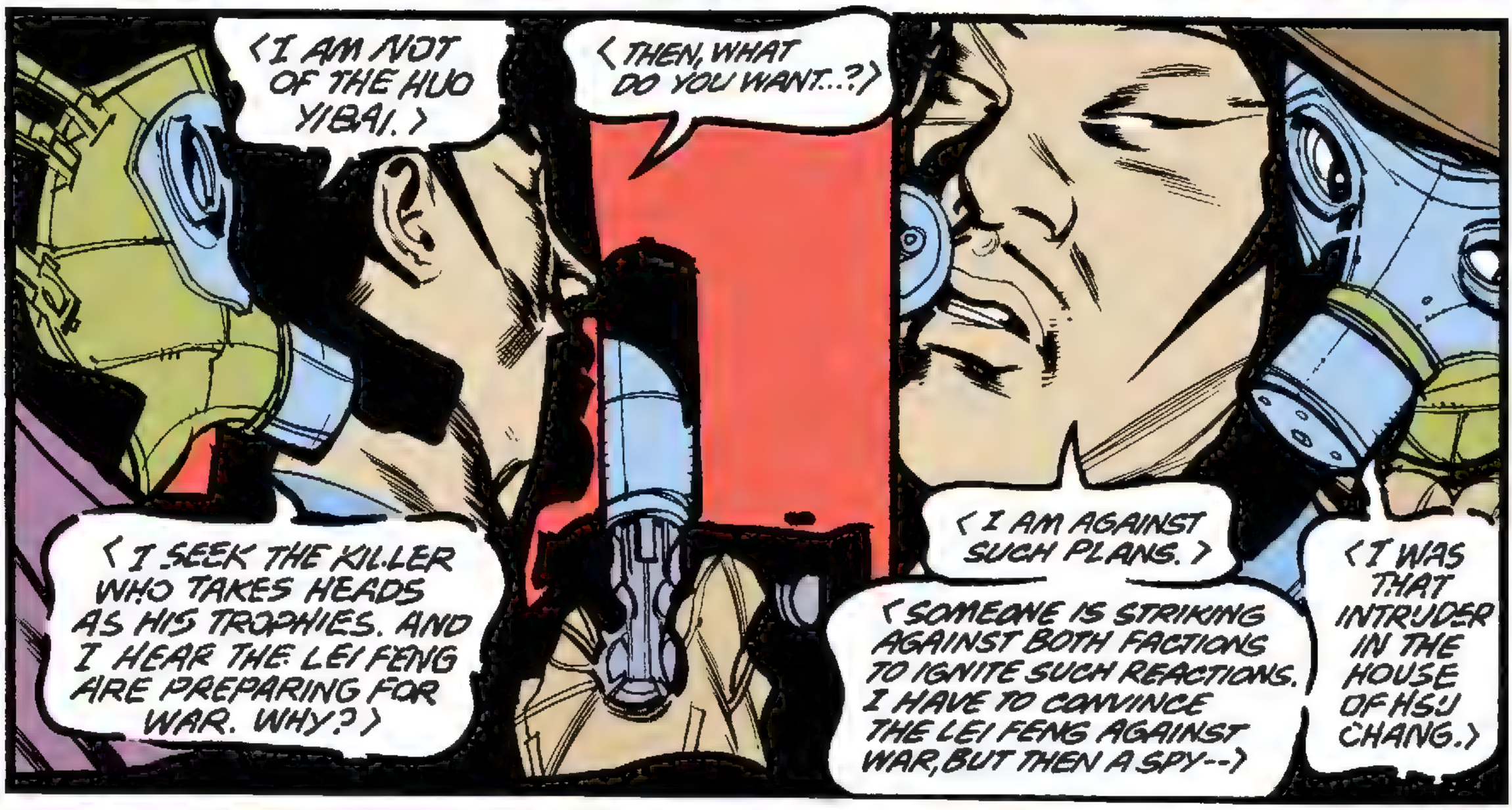
THE ARGUMENT THAT I KNOW IS COMING CAN JUST WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW. I *AM* IN A HURRY.

NEED TO TUCK ME IN *TOO*, DADDY?

BE SERIOUS, DIAN, AND LOCK THE DOOR.

MEN.

〈CLOSE THE DOOR SMOOTHLY, ZHANG CHAI LAO. THIS ONE WOULD SPEAK TO YOU IN PRIVATE.〉
〈WH-WHO ARE YOU?〉


〈I AM NOT OF THE HUO YIBAI.〉
〈THEN, WHAT DO YOU WANT...?〉
〈I SEEK THE KILLER WHO TAKES HEADS AS HIS TROPHIES. AND I HEAR THE LEI FENG ARE PREPARING FOR WAR. WHY?〉
〈I AM AGAINST SUCH PLANS.〉
〈SOMEONE IS STRIKING AGAINST BOTH FACTIONS TO IGNITE SUCH REACTIONS. I HAVE TO CONVINCE THE LEI FENG AGAINST WAR, BUT THEN A SPY--〉
〈I WAS THAT INTRUDER IN THE HOUSE OF HSU CHANG.〉

〈BUT WHY DO YOU SEEK THIS KILLER?〉
〈TO CAST HIM INTO THE VEIL OF SHADOWS--WHERE HIS OWN FOUL APPETITES WILL CONSUME HIM.〉
〈TELL YOUR ELDERS THAT THE SANDMAN HUNTS THIS BEAST WHO PREYS UPON THEM. TO FIGHT AMONGST THEMSELVES IS SHEER SUICIDE.〉
〈FOR NONE CAN ESCAPE THE SANDMAN'S DARK DREAM.〉
21

<UHHNNNNN...>

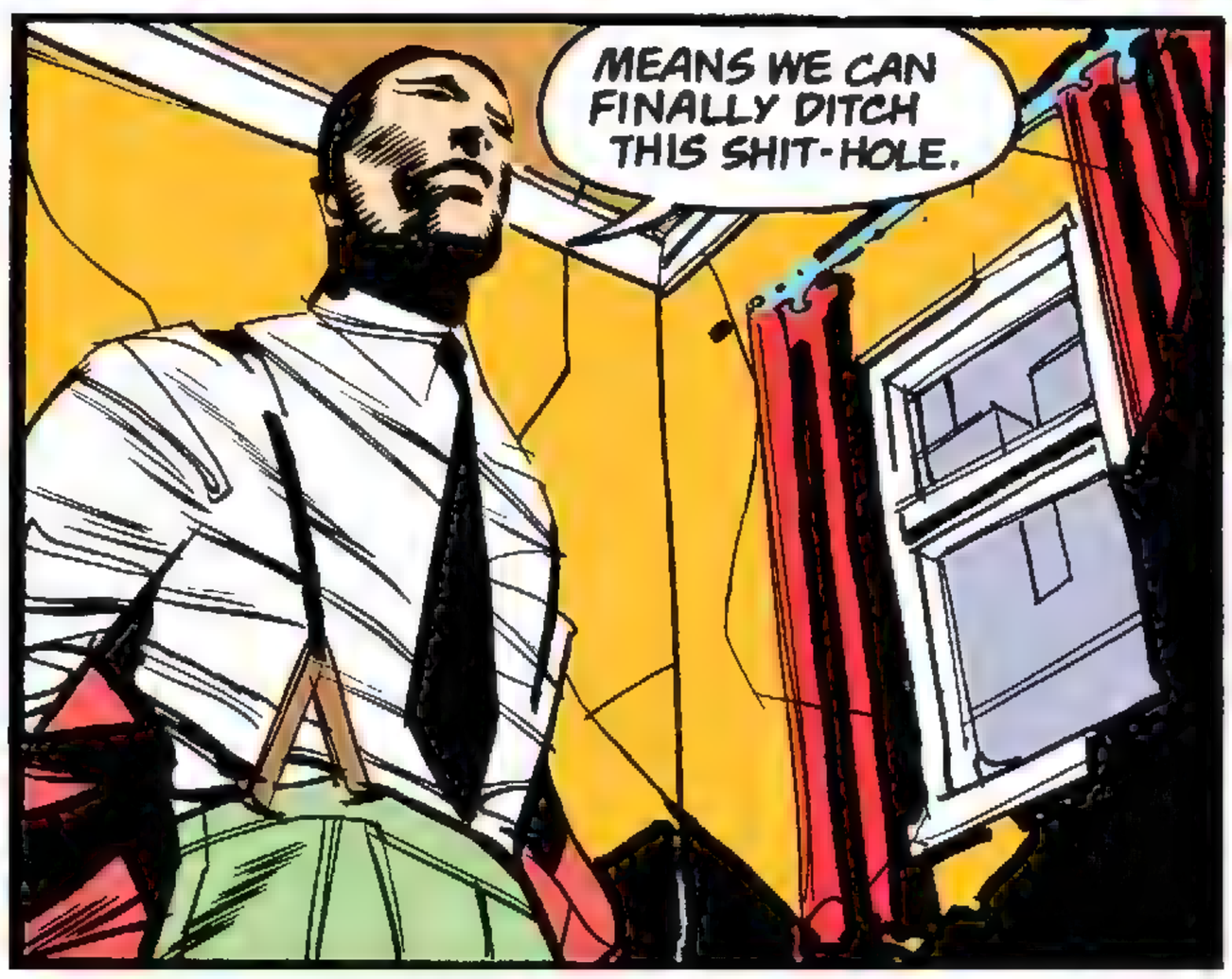
HONK-!!

22

HOTEL

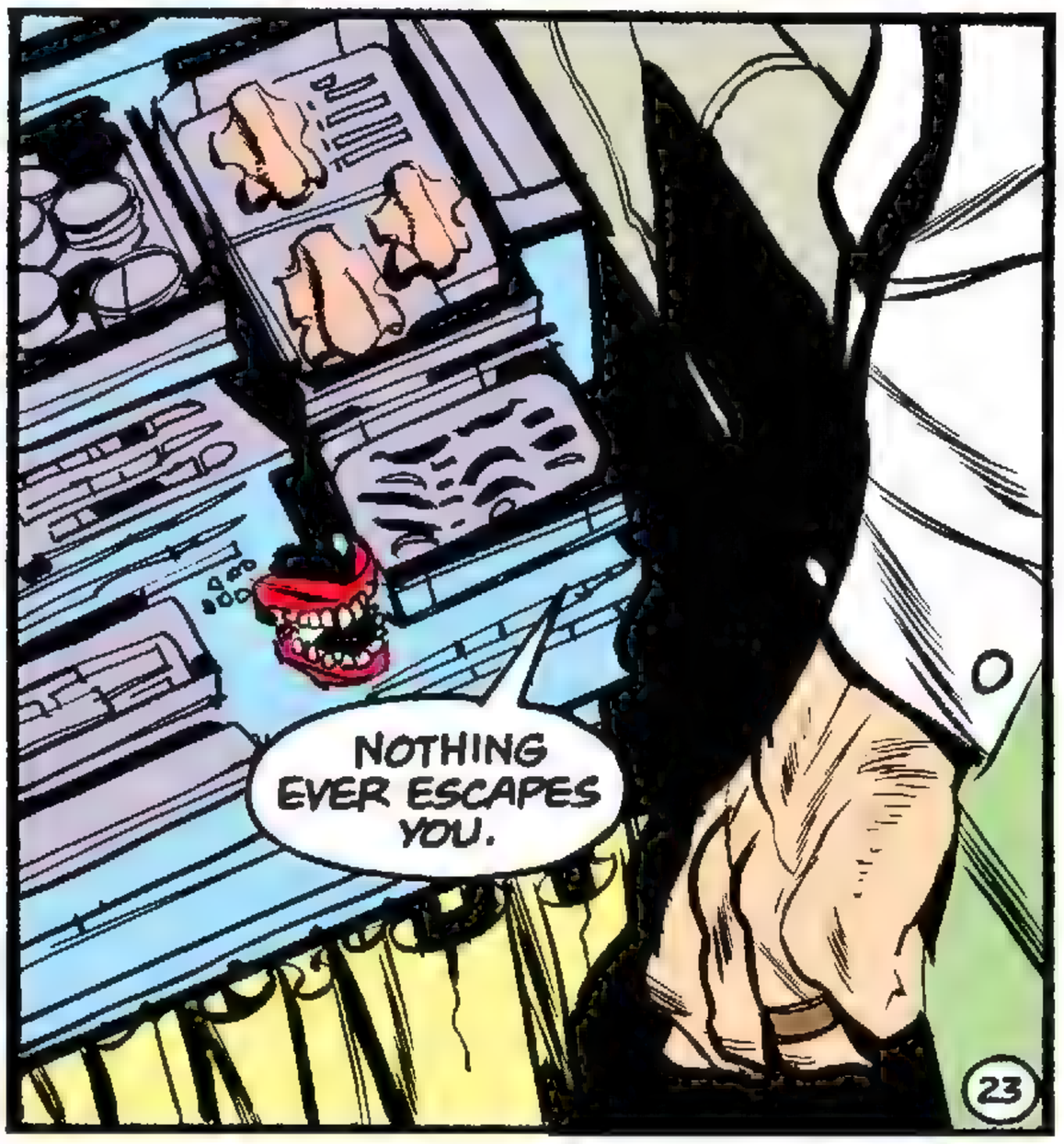
WELL NOW, WELL NOW BEAUTIFUL...

...THAT SHOULD BE THE LAST ONE FOR A WHILE.


MEANS WE CAN FINALLY DITCH THIS SHIT-HOLE.

MOVE BACK HOME AGAIN.
OH, YES, SWEETHEART.

CONGRATULATE YOUR GORGEOUS SELF.


NOTHING EVER ESCAPES YOU.
23

YOU ARE RELENTLESS.

P-P... MMPH--

POWERFUL!

STWONG!

AND SUCH A PWETTY, PWETTY BOY.

Y-YOUR...

I...

S-S-STEADY, NOW SWEETHEART...

NUFFIN' TO WOSE YOUR WITTLE HEAD ABOUT...

OH, NO, NO, NO...

NO INDEED.

DC

VERTIGO

NO. 7

OCT 93

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

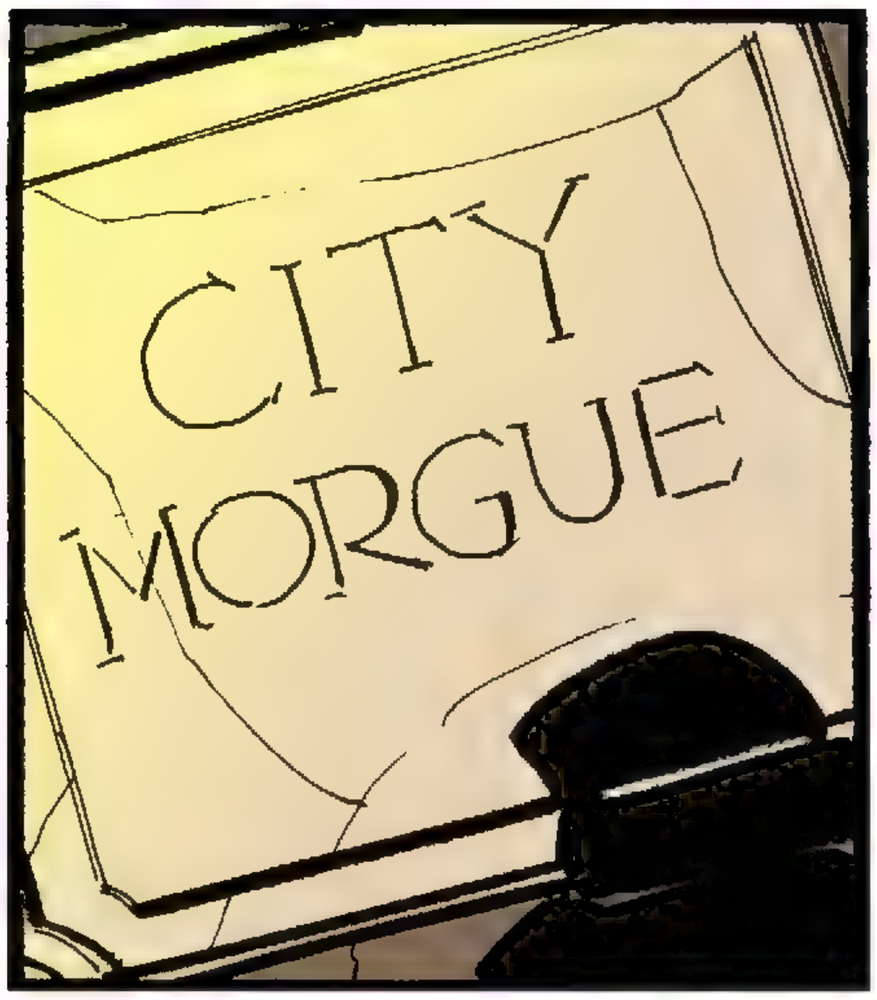
SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE™

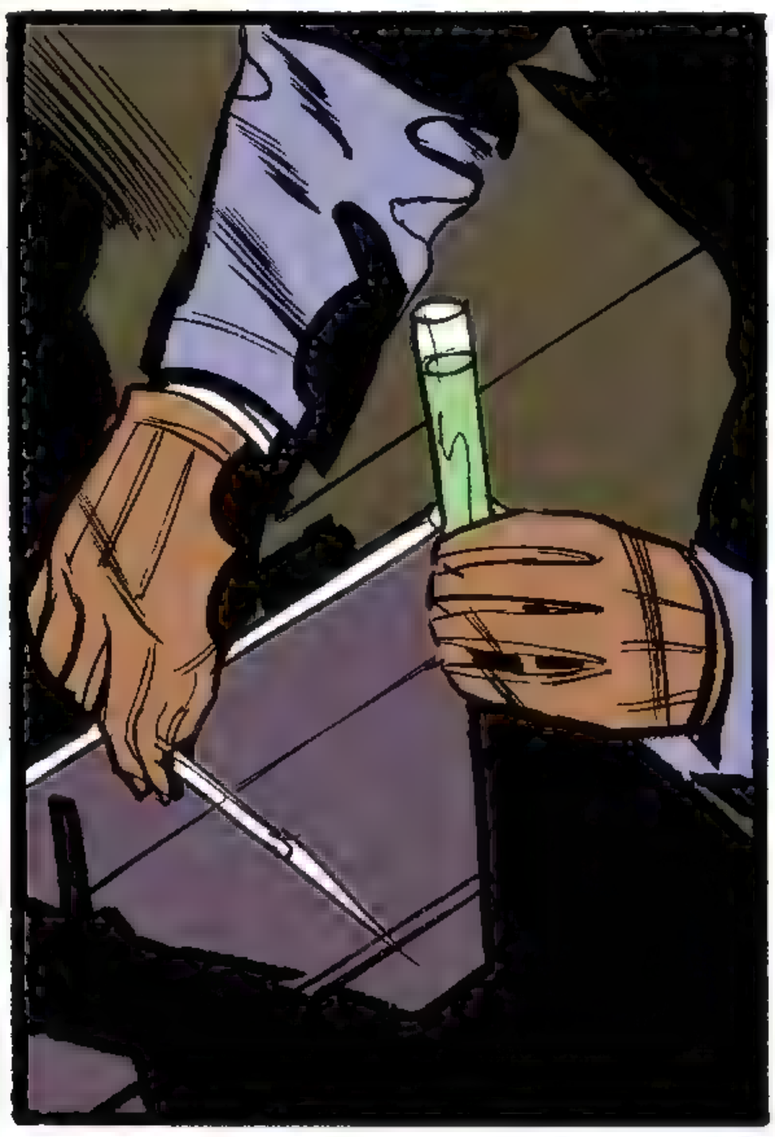
by Matt Wagner & John Watkiss

THE FACE 1 OF 4

GAVIN WILSON R BROWNS

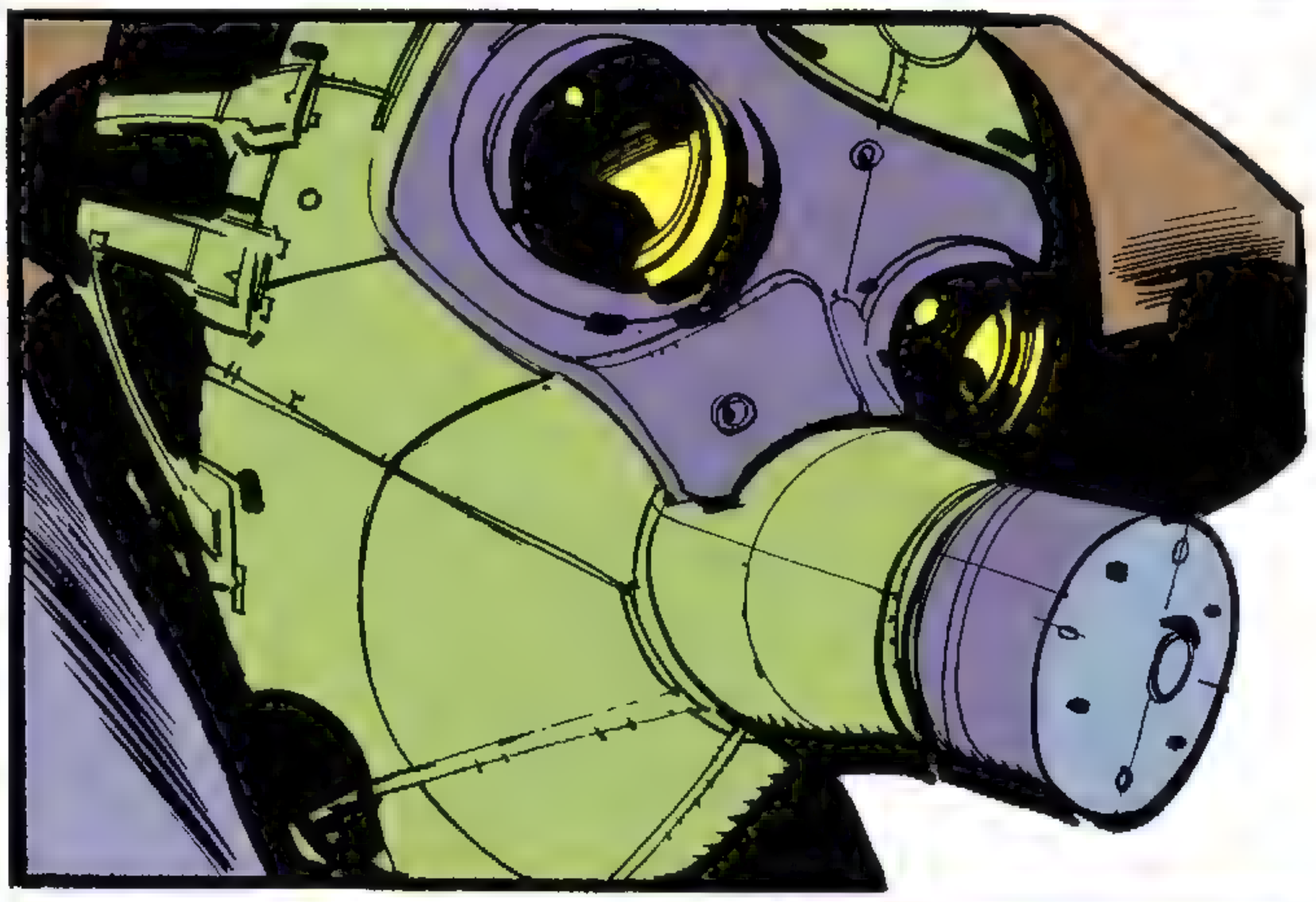
"...the bloodshot eyes narrowed, cold hatred dancing there like fire."

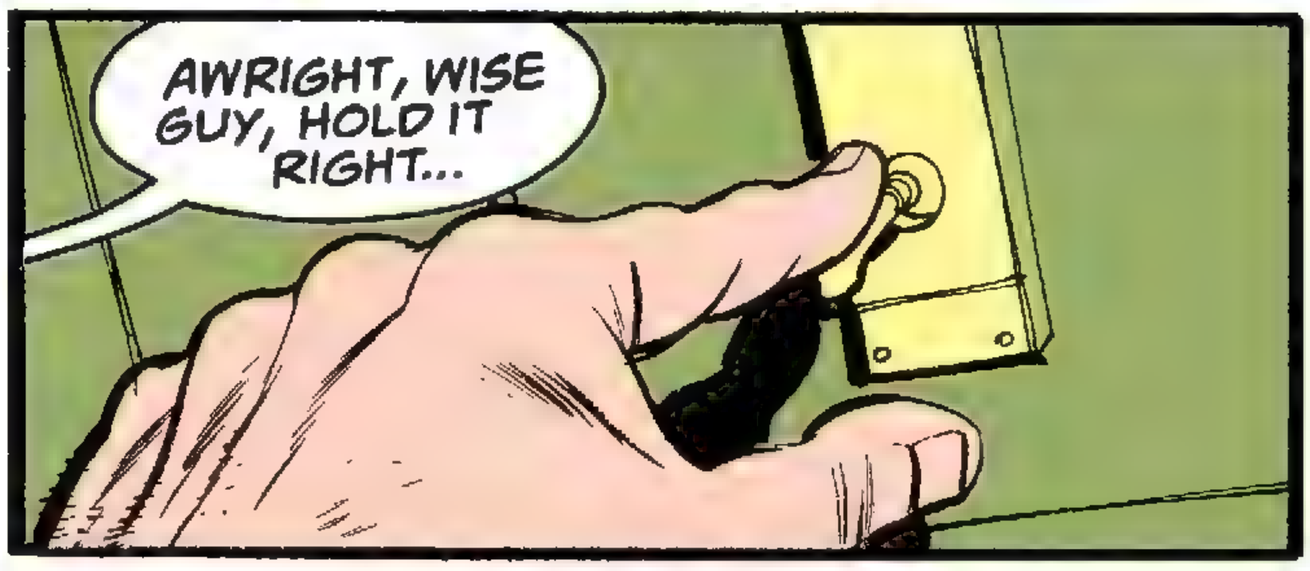

CITY
MORGUE

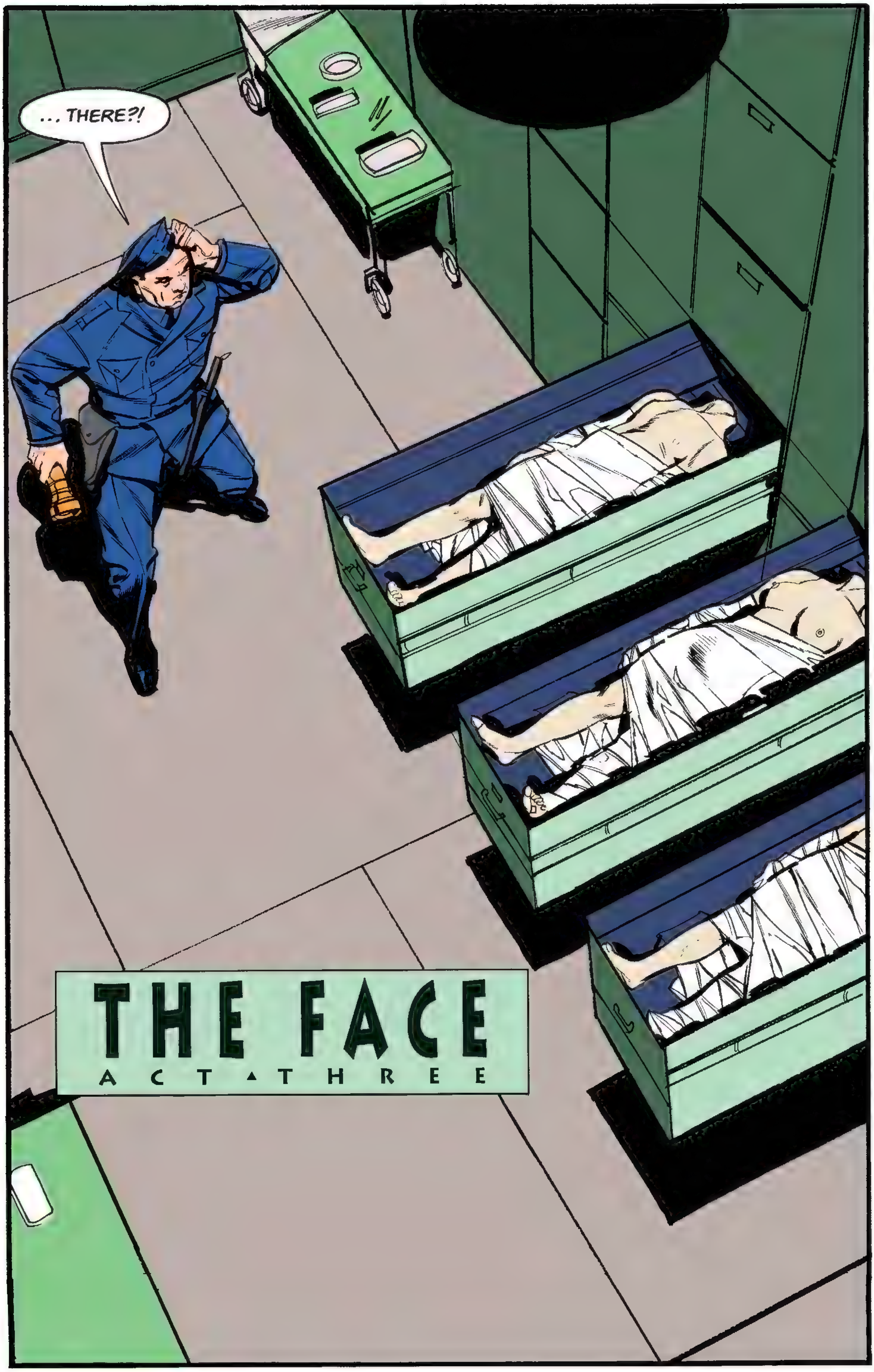


HEY!
X7

HEY...
WHO'S THERE?!




AWRIGHT, WISE GUY, HOLD IT RIGHT...


... THERE?!
THE FACE
ACT THREE

TH-DUNK

SKREEEE

<UNNH--! (KOFF, KOFF)>

HSSS-- (KOFF, KOFF) HSSSS--

<HSU CHANG!!>

<HACK! (KOFF, KOFF, KOFF)>

<OPE--OPEN UP! HELLO?! (HAOK, KOFF) OPEN (KOFF, KOFF, KOFF)>

<WHAT IS IT?! WHO DARES DISTURB THIS HOUSE...?!>

<ZHANG CHA! LAO! WHAT DO YOU WANT?!>

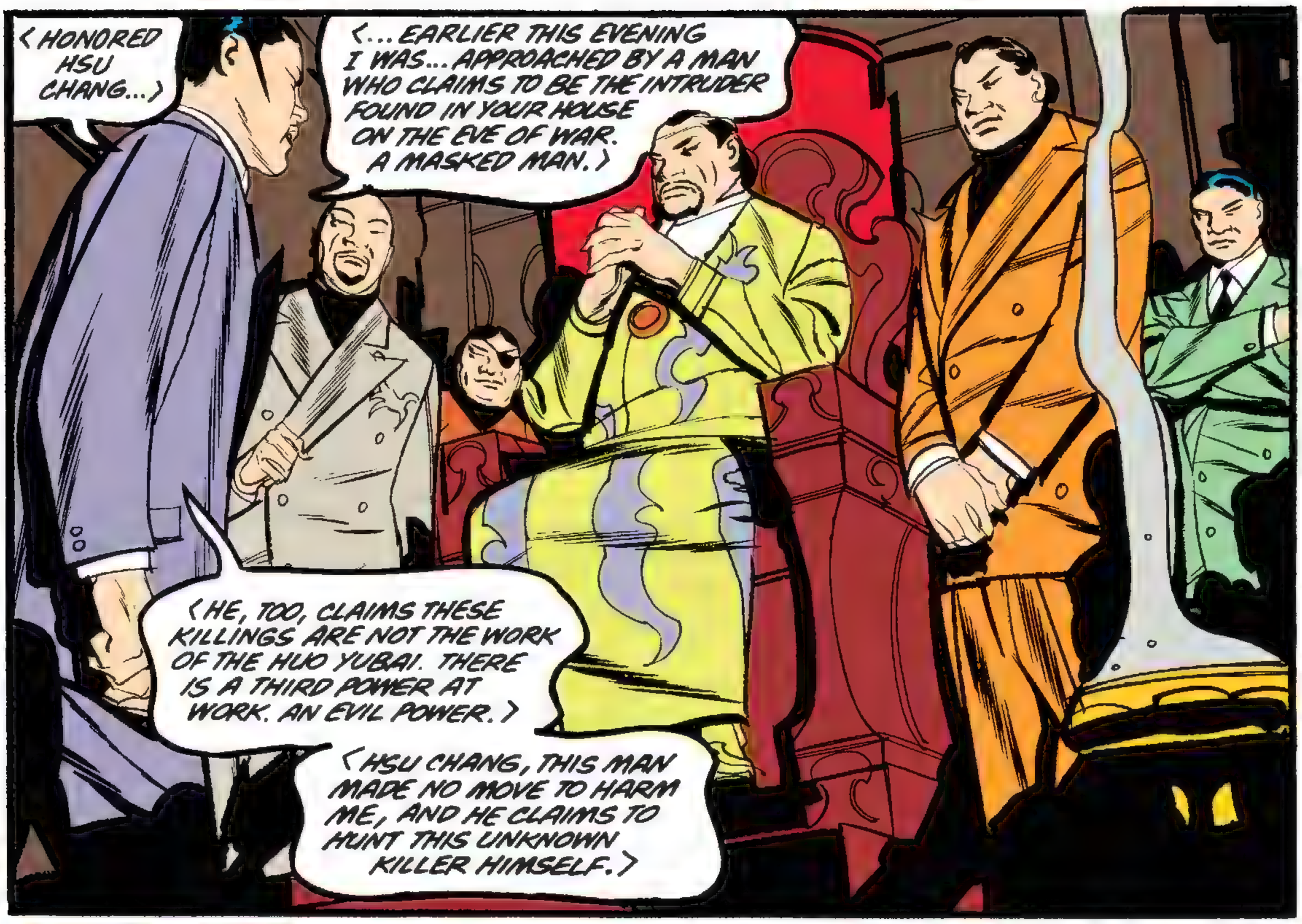
<HSU CHANG!!>

<KOFF! KOFF! I MUST BE ALLOWED TO SPEAK WITH HSU CHANG! AT ONCE!>

<IMPOSSIBLE. THE HOUR IS-->

<I BEAR NEWS OF THE KILLER! (KOFF, KOFF)>

3


〈HONORED HSU CHANG...〉
〈...EARLIER THIS EVENING I WAS...APPROACHED BY A MAN WHO CLAIMS TO BE THE INTRUDER FOUND IN YOUR HOUSE ON THE EVE OF WAR. A MASKED MAN.〉
〈HE, TOO, CLAIMS THESE KILLINGS ARE NOT THE WORK OF THE HUO YUBAI. THERE IS A THIRD POWER AT WORK. AN EVIL POWER.〉
〈HSU CHANG, THIS MAN MADE NO MOVE TO HARM ME, AND HE CLAIMS TO HUNT THIS UNKNOWN KILLER HIMSELF.〉

〈I BELIEVE HIM.〉
〈YOUR PLEAS ARE SINCERE, ZHANG CHAI LAO, BUT YOUR TRUST HERE IS MISGUIDED. WHY SHOULD I TRUST THE WORDS OF ONE WHO WILL NOT SHOW HIS FACE...〉
〈ONCE AGAIN, I ASK THAT YOU LAY ASIDE YOUR DECLARATION OF WAR. LET US HEED THE MASKED MAN'S WARNING BEFORE WE DESTROY OURSELVES.〉
〈AND WHO ADMITS BREAKING INTO MY HOUSE?〉
〈MUST THE ENTIRE WORLD BE VIEWED AS OUR ENEMIES?! HAS THE WESTERN WORLD TURNED US ALL INTO SAVAGES?!〉
4

〈YOU ARE STILL A YOUNG MAN, ZHANG CHAI.〉

〈AND AS SUCH, YOU SEE THE WORLD AS IT OUGHT TO BE. THERE WAS ANOTHER MURDER COMMITTED EARLIER THIS EVENING--〉
〈A SING-SING GIRL.〉
〈I KNOW. BUT THAT STILL DOES NOT CONDEMN THE HUO YUBAI. AS I SAID--〉

〈AS YOU GROW OLDER, MY FRIEND, YOU WILL LEARN. THE WORLD DOES NOT TURN US INTO SAVAGES.〉

〈WE DO IT TO OURSELVES.〉

AAAAAAA...

〈LEI PING! N--OH NO. NO. NO.〉
〈LITTLE ONE...〉
〈N-N-NUH--

〈(sob) PLE...PLEASE EXCUSE THIS ONE'S SHAME... AH--AH-- HONORED...S-S-HSU CHANG...〉
5

SSSSSSS

BZZZZ

The next day, I had to try to see Jimmy. That scene with Daddy was unforgivable.

WHAT IS IT--?! OH... IT'S YOU.

But things were far worse than I could have imagined.

JIMMY! GOOD LORD, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? I--I...

MM' FINE, DIAN... JUS' TIRE... WHAT DO YOU WANT?

WELL, I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE... FOR LAST NIGHT'S--

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT! DIAN, PLEASE... JUST GO AWAY...

NO! JIMMY, THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU. WHAT'S WRONG?! I KNOW DADDY CAN BE--

DIAN, I SAID I DON'T CARE. COME IN. LEAVE. I DON'T CARE...

MY BIG, GODDAMN ICE PALACE.

AND HERE COMES THE SNOW QUEEN, NOW.

JUST LET ME RELAX IN MY PALACE.

OH, STOP ALL THIS PIOUS SHIT, JIMMY!

YOU WERE ALWAYS SO PROUD OF THIS APARTMENT. NOW, WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?!

EVERYTHING.

I'M THE WRONG SORT OF COLOR. THE WRONG SORT OF CLASS. THE WRONG SORT OF PHILOSOPHY.

WRONG SORT OF SON...

JIMMY, I DON'T UNDERSTAND. THIS ISN'T EVEN ABOUT US? IS IT... IS IT ABOUT THIS SITUATION WITH THE TONG KILLINGS?

THE TONGS!

BAH! BRANDED AS BANDITS FOR SUPPLYING THE LUSTS OF THE WHITE MAN. THE ONLY DECENT LIVING WE ARE *ALLOWED* IN YOUR WORLD!!

SAY, DON'T MAKE ME PART OF YOUR DRAMATIC SELF-PITY!!

YOUR OPIUM. YOUR GAMBLING. YOUR WHORES... THAT GIRL WHO *WAS MURDERED* LAST NIGHT...

THAT *INNOCENT* GIRL...

WELL, I DIDN'T KILL HER!!

THAT GIRL WAS MY SISTER...

8

JIMMY, I...

SHE WAS ONLY FIFTEEN.

DIAN, ONCE AGAIN, PLEASE... JUST GO. AND LEAVE ME ALONE.

I... I REALLY WANT TO STAY.

NO.

I didn't wait for the elevator but rather ran down all the stairs. I couldn't bear to pause in my leaving.

If I had looked back I would've drowned along with him.

Drowned in a raging tide of hatreds.

And as usual of late, when the world seems too turbulent and black...

KNOCK KNOCK

I turned to the one man who seems to soothe me. Focus me.

MISS BELMONT, GOOD EVENING.

WHY, YES, BUT HE'S... WELL, HE'S.. WELL, HE'S RETIRING FOR THE EVENING...

HELLO, HUMPHRIES. I NEED TO SPEAK TO MR. DODDS. IS HE HOME?

BUT, THIS IS SO EARLY FOR HIM. WON'T YOU JUST ANNOUNCE ME?

I'M SORRY MISS, BUT I...

IT'S ALL RIGHT, HUMPHRIES. GOOD EVENING, DIAN.

WES! I'M SORRY TO BARGE IN ON YOU LIKE THIS, YET AGAIN--

NONSENSE, DIAN. SHALL WE SIT DOWN?

YES. YES, THANK YOU.

IT'S...IT'S ABOUT MY FRIEND, JIMMY.

HIS... WELL, JIMMY HAS WORKED HIS WAY UP FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, AND FOR SOME TIME NOW I'VE WONDERED IF HE EVER HAD INVOLVE-MENT WITH THE CHINATOWN TONGS.

IF HE WAS POOR, HE COULD HARDLY AVOID IT.

THE TONGS ARE SOME OF THE ONLY OPPORTUNI-TIES AVAILABLE TO ORIENTALS IN THIS COUNTRY.

10

GO ON.

WELL, LAST NIGHT THERE WAS ANOTHER MURDER IN CHINATOWN. A YOUNG GIRL. A PROSTITUTE.

SHE WAS JIMMY'S SISTER.

OH, DIAN, I'M SORRY. HOW'S HE HOLDING UP?

NOT SO WELL. BUT HE AS MUCH AS ADMITTED TO ME THAT HE WAS ACTIVE IN THE TONGS. CURRENTLY, IT SEEMED.

YOU'RE SURE OF THIS?

ALMOST CERTAIN. YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I SAW A BITTERNESS IN HIM TONIGHT THAT I HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE. AND NOT JUST GRIEF. HATRED.

SUDDENLY, I COULD BELIEVE ALL MY FATHER'S SUSPICIONS...

HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO YOUR FATHER YET ABOUT THIS?

I SUPPOSE I MUST. I-I DIDN'T LIKE FACING UP TO THIS FACT BUT NOW I CAN'T IGNORE IT.

A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP MIGHT HELP.

MAYBE SO.

THAT'S WHERE I'M HEADED MYSELF. PLEASANT DREAMS, DIAN.

GOOD NIGHT, WES. AND THANKS.

YOUR THINGS, SIR...

11

WHAM WHAM WHAM WHAM

OKAY, LET'S GO! OPEN UP! WE KNOW YA LIVE UPSTAIRS!!

POLICE!! OPEN UP!

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

LET'S GO! THIS IS THE POLICE!

PLEASE, PLEASE!! THE NEIGHBORS-- WE ARE CLOSED!

DETECTIVE BURKE, N.Y.P.D. WE NEED ACCESS TO YOUR SALES RECORDS, SO NOW YOU'RE OPEN.

BUT--

NOTHIN' ON YOU, POPS. THIS IS IN CONNECTION WITH THOSE CHINATOWN MURDERS. FORENSICS SAY A SURGICAL HACKSAW WAS USED IN TWO OF 'EM.

BUT THAT THE GUY USING IT *WASN'T* A DOCTOR.

WE NEED RECORDS OF ALL YOUR CUSTOMERS WITHOUT A MEDICAL LICENSE.

BUT, YOU, *EHHH*... HAVE NO WARRANT?

WELL, I COULD JUST *KICK* THE GODDAMN DOOR IN. BUT MY FOOT KINDA HURTS. I MIGHT GET MAD IF I DID THAT.

HMM... THE LIGHT MUST'VE JUST BURNT OUT. IT WAS WORKING EARLI--

NO, NO! IT'S OKAY. HERE, SEE? I'M OPENING IT FOR YOU!

MCDANIELS, GET OVER HERE WITH YOUR FLASH.

QUICK ABOUT IT.

12

OKAY, SHINE IT AROUND. OVER THERE.

NOW, OVER THERE.

SLOWLY...

THERE!

LET 'IM HAVE IT!

FOOOSH

AH--HACK! HACK--! KOFF!

REYNOLDS, WATCH THE DOOR--KOFF-KOFF-KOFF!

<GASP>

COME OUT OF THERE, YOU!

GGAH!

UNNH--

FOOOSH

AACK-!

UNHHH...

<GASP>

<KOFF, KOFF>

MA--<GASP> MAKES THREE I OWE YOU... BASTARD!! <KOFF, KOFF...>

UNh--

THUD

YOU ARE LATE, MR. SHAN.

NOW, BENSON, I'M SURE THE BOY HAS GOOD REASONS. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, JIMMY?

YES SIR, MR. ROSS.

PLEASE EXCUSE MY TARDINESS. A FAMILY EMERGENCY HAS THROWN ME SOMEWHAT OFF-SCHEDULE.

NOW, YOU HAD QUESTIONS REGARDING...?

WHY, THE ANNEX BUILDING WE ALSO DISCUSSED BUYING. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WE TALKED ABOUT THIS?

AH YES, OF COURSE...

WELL, I HAVEN'T GOTTEN IN CONTACT WITH THE CURRENT OWNER YET, BUT...

WHEN EXACTLY *WERE* YOU PLANNING ON DOING THIS, JIMMY?

I...APOLOGIZE FOR THIS INCONVENIENCE, GENTLEMEN.

BUT, I WILL RESOLVE THIS POINT IMMEDIATELY. THERE IS *NO PROBLEM* WITH THE STATE OF THINGS ON OUR END, I ASSURE YOU.

AHH... REFRESH MY MEMORY ON THE ADDRESS AGAIN?

15

March 6, 1938 -- the next evening, I tried to confront Daddy with the subject of Jimmy. But I couldn't seem to get his attention away from Fibber and Molly.

NOT THAT CLOSET, McGEE!

AHA-HA-HA-HA-HAAAA!

Or maybe I still wasn't quite convinced enough.

RING RING RING

I'LL -- Heh, heh -- I'LL GET IT, DIAN. OH, THAT PROGRAM -- Heh...

mdk, mffk. dmrfowmf. safdj slf... WHAT?!

OH, McGEE!!

THE SANDMAN?! THEN HE'S IN ON THE TROUBLE IN CHINATOWN!

GOD-DAMN IT! THE LAST THING WE NEED RIGHT NOW...

"... IS SOMEBODY ELSE STICKING THEIR NOSE INTO THAT MESS."

AVERY SHOALS
-ANTIQUE-
RESTORATIONS

PLEASANT DREAMS.

FOOSH

YOU ARE AVERY SHOALS?

N-NO.

WHY IS THIS OFFICE AN EMPTY ONE? WHAT SCHEME DOES IT FRONT?

D-DUNNO. JUS' A COURIER.

PICK UP THE MAIL. TAKE 'TA LOCKER AT GRAND CENTRAL.

TELL ME THE NUMBER AND THEN SLEEP.

17

FACE: Conference Desired. Tonight at The Metropolitan. Box 32.

SO, I'M HERE, FAT-ASS.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

WE NEED ANOTHER ONE.

AND NO GIRLS THIS TIME. THOSE SLANTS DON'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT THEIR WOMEN.

YOUNG MIDTOWN HUSTLER. NAME OF JIMMY SHAN.

MAKE IT HIM.

DIDN'T KNOW YOU LIKED MUSIC, FAT-ASS.

YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT ME, FRIEND.

THANK GOD.

MAKE YOUR DEPOSIT, FAT-ASS. BUT THIS *WILL* BE THE LAST ONE.

18

CHINATOWN

K-CHCK

KLECK--

TINK TINK TINK TINK TINK

TINK TINK TINK TINK TINK TINK TINK TINK

TINK

21

WHAM

22

Oh god, I shake now when I think about it.

What if I hadn't decided to follow him? What if I'd betrayed Jimmy as I'd first intended.

Told Daddy.

I'm still so surprised he never noticed me.

I mean, of course I stood out like a white thumb down there.

In the inner market-places. Where the poverty shows undisguised. Babies in the gutters. Rats everywhere.

My God, the things that I saw.

And that Jimmy didn't even seem to notice.

JIMMY!!

(Gasp!)

THUNK

OHMIGOD--

JIMMY--

OHMIGOD--

And then I saw blood on his head.

Bright against the shadows and squalor. I don't even remember planning to bring the gun with me.

But, God--Oh, God--thank, God that I did.

JIMMY!!

KRAK

EE-YAAA-GGHHHH!!

OHMIGOD--

DIAN?!

WHAT'RE... GET THE... I--

UNHH...

HELLP!

SOMEBODY! ANYBODY! PLEASE, HELP MEEE...!

DC

ISSUE 8
NOV 93

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

HELLBLAZER

BOOK 4 OF 4

GAVIN WILSON • R.BRUNING

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

BY MATT WAGNER & JOHN WATKISS

"...the killer advanced, grunting in rhythm beneath the dry, shiny flesh."

THE FACE

FINAL

ACT

SUPERB INDUSTRIAL NOSE-FILTERS

FACE: Conference Desired.
Tonight at The Metropolitan.
Box 32.

LON CHANEY IN LAUGH OWL AU

B-BMP

BMP
B-BMP

It must've looked strange to those who answered my cries for help--a white woman kneeling over a bleeding Oriental. But to hell with what people thought!

I'M HERE, JIMMY.

DIAN... WHAT-- WHAT HAPPENED? I DON'T REMEMB--

SHHH... JUST RELAX. YOU WERE... YOU WERE ATTACKED.

OH YESSS... I RECALL NOW...

AND THEN... THERE WAS A SHOT.

THAT... THAT WAS ME. I FOLLOWED YOU HERE FROM YOUR APARTMENT. I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS DOING, I... I JUST HAD TO BE SURE YOU WERE--

YOU?

YOU FOLLOWED ME?!

JIMMY, THEY SAID YOU SHOULD LIE STILL.

DIAN, SHUT UP!

AM I SOME CHILD FOR YOU TO LOOK AFTER?!

I DON'T NEED TO BE PROTECTED BY WOMEN, DIAN!! OR DID PAPA BELMONT FINALLY WIN HIS CASE? WERE YOU-- NNGHH-- WERE YOU SPYING AFTER THE YELLOW MAN'S DIRTY SECRETS?

JIMMY, NO! I--

"JIMMY"! HA!! YOU DON'T EVEN REMEMBER MY REAL NAME, DO YOU? JUST GET THE HELL AWAY FROM ME, SNOW QUEEN.

I ALWAYS KNEW YOU WERE ONLY SLUMMING.

OH, JIMMY...

ALL RIGHT, YOUNG LADY, THIS... THIS BULLSHIT HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH!

DADDY!!

BMP B-BMP BMP BMP

SSSHHHHH "IN LAUGH CLOWN LAUGH"

NNNGHH... EEE! EEE! EEE!

KLMP KLMP KLMP

YYYAAGGHH...

OH--OH, SWEETHEART... EEE!... NNNGGH--

WH--WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO US, BABY?!

NNNGGH--

EEE!

LON CHANEY IN "LAUGH CLOWN LAUGH"

THEY--SHE... SHE SHOT OUR GORGEOUS BODY... OUR...BEAUTIFUL...

...POWERFUL...

...BODY-- EH?!

YOU ARE IN PAIN. PLEASANT D--

YYYAAARGGH!!

EEEYYYAAGGH!!
IT HURTS OUR FACE!
IT HURTS OUR EYES!

G-GGACK--

FOOSH!

LAUGH CLOWN LAUGH

IT...HRTSARFACE...
HRTSARFACE...HRTZ...

(GASP!)

ACK-KOFF...
(GASP)
KOFF KOFF
KOFF KOFF...

I had refused to speak to Daddy all the long, dark ride home. That situation soon changed once we were inside the door.

AND, FURTHER-MORE...

I AM NOT A CHILD!!

HE'D HAVE BEEN KILLED IF NOT FOR ME!

AND GOOD RIDDANCE.

THE VERY FACT OF HIS ASSAULT POINTS TO HOW DEEPLY HE MUST BE INVOLVED! THAT DIRTY, LITTLE, YELLOW BASTARD...

DADDY!!

I MEAN IT! JUST LOOK AT WHAT HIS INFLUENCE HAS DONE TO YOU, DIAN!

SNEAKING AROUND IN THE NIGHT, *STEALING* MY REVOLVER TO TAKE WITH YOU...

WHICH YOU INSISTED I LEARN HOW TO USE!

YES, BUT TO PROTECT YOURSELF. *NOT* TO TAKE THE LAW INTO YOUR OWN HANDS!!

LIKE SOME...SOME VIGILANTE DEBUTANTE!!

OH, DADDY, COME ON...

7

YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE I'M THE "SANDWOMAN."

DIAN, DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. YOU'RE MY DAUGHTER.

NOW, MAYBE IT DOESN'T OCCUR TO YOU HOW THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S DAUGHTER BEING INVOLVED IN SUCH AFFAIRS MIGHT PROVE DAMAGING, SO I'M AFRAID I'VE GOT TO PLACE YOU ON HOUSE ARREST.

DADDY, PLEASE, I... YOU...?

WHAT?!

WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU MEAN BY THA--

OFFICER?

EVENIN', SIR.

MY DAUGHTER IS TO NEITHER LEAVE THE PREMISES THIS EVENING, NOR TO RECEIVE VISITORS OF ANY SORT. IS THAT CLEAR?

YES SIR.

SLAM!

At first I couldn't believe it.

Locked in my room like some bloody teenager! And I'd be damned if I was going to crawl through the goddamn window.

Damn it! Damn it! Damn it!

BURLEY'S

OKAY?!

YOU GOT THAT?!

READ IT BACK TO ME!

UH-HUH. RIGHT. YES.

FINE.

NOW, THAT *MUST* RUN IN THIS EVENING'S NIGHT OWL EDITION. IT IS *VERY* IMPORTANT THAT THE PERSON RECEIVE THIS ANNOUNCEMENT.

YEAH, YEAH, GOOD NIGHT, GOOD NIGHT... JESUS!

YOU! I'LL TAKE A DOUBLE SHOT OF WHISKEY. NO! BRING THE BOTTLE.

OKAY! OKAY! CHRIST, YOU'RE *HURTING ME!!*

WELL, NOW, TALL AND DARK... IS THERE HANDSOME UNDER-NEATH THAT COLLAR AS WELL?

LET'S SEE...

CAREFUL, LITTLE GIRLY.

GET TOO CLOSE AND I MIGHT JUST BITE YOUR HEAD OFF.

HEH.

CHEW UP YOUR BRAIN AND SPIT OUT YOUR EYES.

WHERE YA HEADED, HONEY?

HOSPITAL

231.

OH, YEAHHH... THE YELLOW ONE.

I DIDN'T THINK WE TOOK... THEM.

REALLY? I DON'T KNOW THE POLICY. OH WELL, DOESN'T BOTHER ME.

I JUST WISH THEY SPOKE GOOD ENGLISH.

YEAH?

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MMM. MOST OF THEM ARE KIND OF SIMPLE, I HEAR. BUT, AT LEAST THEY DON'T SMELL BAD LIKE THE COLOREDS.

GOOD LUCK...

THANKS. I'LL...

I'LL...

WHY, TH-THE PATIENT, HE... HE'S GONE!! ESCAPED!

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10

GENTLEMEN, GENTLEMEN...

I'M HERE TO ADDRESS YOUR CONCERNS OVER THE... SITUATION IN CHINA-TOWN. AS LEADERS OF THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY, I UNDERSTAND YOUR DISTRESS OVER THE CONTINUING VIOLENCE.

REST ASSURED OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS ARE CRACKING DOWN HARD ON SUCH UNREST. WE *WILL* BRING THESE FOREIGN DEVILS UNDER CONTROL.

THE MAYOR SEEMS TO BE UNDER A LOT OF PRESSURE, HERMAN.

NO DOUBT. NO DOUBT. STILL, THIS DOESN'T HELP OUR CAUSE AT ALL.

EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM VIEWS THE ORIENTALS AS SOME-THING LESS THAN HUMAN.

OH, WELL OF COURSE, THAT'S WHAT I MEANT.

NOT *EVERY* ONE, MY FRIEND. NOT AS LONG AS YOU AND I EXIST.

OUR SCHOOL'S NOT A DEAD ISSUE YET, MY FRIEND.

NO. NOT DEAD YET, BENSON.

"NOT DEAD YET."

FAT MAN: **Must** meet this evening. Central Park Lake. Midnight. Don't be late. -- The Face

GOOD NIGHT, MR. WESLEY DODDS.

AND PLEASANT DREAMS.

The longer I sat there, stewing inside the confines of my own house, the more sure I became that Jimmy was still in danger.

IF only from himself.

HELP!!!

HELP! EEEEEE-- HE'S... HE'S RAISING HIS HANDS TO MY THROAT!! SOMEBODY.. ANYONE... PLEASE...

HELP MEEEEEEEE--

TUNE IN NEXT WEEK FOR THE EXCITING CONCLUSION TO THIS EPISODE OF... THE INNER SANCTUM!!

GODDAMN HIM. IT'S TWENTY PAST AND *HE* SAID, "DON'T BE LATE."

DRIVER, CHECK ALONG THAT PATH THROUGH THE TREES. HIM AND HIS GODDAMN GAMES.

YES, SIR.

HE'S LUCKY I EVEN ANSWERED HIS GODDAMN AD. CHRIST, IT'S COLD OUT HERE, TOO.

WELL?!

NOTHING.

HHMMPPH--

WELL, THAT'S IT. LET'S GO, DRIVER. THIS MARKS THE END OF MY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE FACE.

HOW RIGHT YOU ARE, SIR...

14

<ZHANG CHAI LAO, NOOOOO!! COME BACK! YOU MUST NOT DO THIS THING!!

LET ME GO, MOTHER. I MUST--

<NOO! I KNOW THAT YOUR HEART IS BOILING, EVEN AS MINE IS MELTING. BUT THERE IS MURDER IN YOUR EYES!!>

<SILENCE, MOTHER! THIS IS A MATTER OF HONOR...>

...AND MY FATHER'S GUN WILL HELP RECLAIM IT!

<NOO! I HAVE LOST YOUR SISTER TWICE IN ONE LIFETIME-- PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME CHILDLESS, I BEG YOU!! THEY WILL KILL YOU!!>

JIMMY?

DIAN?! YOU FOLLOWED ME AGAIN?!

NO.

WHEN I LEARNED YOU'D RUN OFF FROM THE HOSPITAL, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT COME HERE. PLEASE, JIMMY, YOU MUST CALM DOWN. THIS-- THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU--!

OH, REALLY?

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME, DIAN? YOU KNOW ONLY ROMANCE AND AFFLUENCE. I AM FAR MORE CRIMINAL THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.

JUST LIKE ALL US "YELLOW "DEVILS"! NOW, OUT OF MY WAY!!

<ZHANG CHAI LAO, PLEASE...!>

JIMMY!

For a moment there, I stood confused--who was the real bigot in all this mess?

Daddy, Jimmy or all of us?

15

CHAK!!

AAGH!

OH-SWEET-JESUS, IT'S *YOU*...

RIGHT YOU ARE, *FAT-ASS!!*

B-BUT *WHY?!* YOU WERE P-P-PAID--

YOU WEASEL.

YOU SET ME UP! HAD ME FOLLOWED!! ATTACKED!!

WH-WHAT?! *NO!!*

SHUT UP, LIAR!!

YOU TRIED TO CLEAN UP YOUR DIRTY LITTLE TRAIL.

I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT! PL-PLEASE... MY ARM--

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BUT THEN, MEN LIKE YOU ALWAYS DO.

HMM...?

HEH?

HEH.

HEH. HEH, HA... HEH... HA, HA, HA!

HA! HA! HA!

THE FACE!!

BETRAYED BY A MASK!!

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE NOW, FAT-ASS...

BUT IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER ANYWA--EH?!!

17

< WU SUNG... MASTER OF THE HUO YUBAI. >

< AUTHOR OF MY SISTER'S DEATH! >

JIMMY...?

I couldn't let him escape me now.

Not with so much left unsaid.

Not with so much hatred walled up between us. Not with his finger on the very trigger of that hatred.

YAAAHHH!!

STEP AWAY FROM THAT MAN!

AND LAY DOWN YOUR WEAPON!!

STEP AWAY FROM THAT MAN!! AND DO NOT STRUGGLE.

N-Ghuh!

GG-GGAGH!

SO THEY THINK THEY CAN CAPTURE US, SWEET-HEART.

THEY DO NOT KNOW...

BUT!

BUT THEY DON'T KNOW US EH, BEAUTIFUL!

YOU CANNOT ESCAPE THE SANDMAN'S DARK DREAM!

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...OUR ABSOLUTE SPIRIT AND RAGE!! GGHHAA--

SPLLAASSH

GLLLGG-- bb-beoofull... blb--

STOP STRUGGLING! I WILL PULL YOU ASHORE--

CHANK!

TH-glb... THEY DON'T KNOW-- Glgg...

...anythiqqllq-- q--qlbb... blb.b...

H-HELP! WH-WHO ARE YOU?!

PL--PLEASE, MY ARM...

FOOSH!

‹WU SUNG!!›
‹PREPARE TO DIE, VICIOUS DOG!›
‹ZHANG CHAI LAO! YOU FOOL.!! YOU WILL BE DEAD THE SECOND AFTER YOU PULL THAT TRIGGER!›

I AM READY TO DIE!
JIMMY, NO!!
STOP THIS INSANITY!! END IT HERE! IT WON'T CHANGE YOUR SISTER'S DEATH! YOU ARE NOT A KILLER!
21

DIAN, GET OUT OF THE WAY!!
JIMMY, I REFUSE TO BELIEVE YOU REALLY WANT THIS!
YOU--YOU'LL HAVE TO SHOOT ME FIRST TO GO THROUGH WITH IT.

WELL? GO AHEAD. DON'T YOU HATE ME AS WELL AS THE REST OF THE WORLD?

I...
I... DIAN, I--FEEL LIKE I'M OUT OF MY MIND.
I FEEL LIKE I'M DYING ALREADY...

YOUNG LADY.
PLEASE REMOVE YOUR FRIEND, THIS GUTTER TRASH, FROM MY PRESENCE--AT ONCE. OR HE WILL FIND HIS FEELINGS A REALITY!

JIMMY...?

C'MON, THIS WAY. WE'LL TAKE A TAXI BACK TO YOUR PLACE. WE CAN TALK...

NO, DIAN.

NEVER AGAIN.

WE... I... I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR CARING SO DEEPLY.

I'M... SORRY FOR WHAT I SAID BEFORE--ALL THOSE THINGS ABOUT YOUR FATHER AND SUCH.

BUT THIS, I'M AFRAID, IS GOOD-BYE.

BUT... BUT, I THOUGHT... WE CAN--

NO. WE CAN'T.

THERE'S TOO MUCH UGLINESS BETWEEN US, DIAN. AND EVEN IF IT'S NOT OF OUR OWN MAKING, IT'S ALSO BEYOND OUR CAPACITY FOR FIXING IT.

THE WORLD MUST CHANGE BEFORE WE CAN, I'M AFRAID.

WELL, MICKEY...

...WHAT DO YOU SAY TO A STIFF BELT BEFORE WE'RE KNEE-DEEP IN GOOKS ONCE AGAIN?

SOUNDS FINE, LIEUTENANT.

HOW ABOUT McSORLEY'S? THAT'S ON THE WAY DOWNTOWN.

22

SWELL. CHRIST, I WISH THIS WHOLE MESS WAS OV-- EH?

WHAT THE HELL'S *THIS?*

BET I KNOW WHO THAT SOMEBODY WAS...

HIS ARM'S HACKED UP PRETTY BAD. SOMEBODY BANDAGED IT, BUT WE BETTER GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL, PRONTO.

"LOOK BEYOND SKIN AND THERE YOU WILL FIND THE REALMS OF THE SOUL, BLEAK AND UNKIND. EVIL KNOWS NAUGHT BUT ITS OWN GREEDY AIMS. THE CHINATOWN MURDERS WERE OF THIS MAN'S REFRAIN."

SIGNED, "THE SANDMAN."

I'LL BE GOD DAMNED!!

YES, DADDY?

HELLO, DEAR.

I... WANTED TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT... EVERYTHING.

THERE'S BEEN A RESOLUTION TO THE SITUATION IN CHINATOWN.

OH?

YES. IT SEEMS THE ORIENTAL COMMUNITY WAS MORE OF A VICTIM THAN ANYONE.

SOMEONE WAS DELIBERATELY TRYING TO CAUSE A WAR BETWEEN THE TONG SOCIETIES.

I--I WANT TO APOLOGIZE...

WHO WAS BEHIND IT ALL, DADDY? WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THESE DEATHS?

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STRANGELY ENOUGH, IT WAS HERMAN ROSS'S PARTNER, ELDRIDGE BENSON, THROUGH THE USE OF SOME HIRED KILLER.

SEEMS HE HAS A TRACE OF ASIAN BLOOD IN HIS LINEAGE AND THE ONLY PERSON WHO KNEW THIS FACT WAS ONE OF THE TONG LEADERS, A MAN NAMED WU SUNG.

BENSON HOPED THAT WU SUNG WOULD BE A CASUALTY OF ANY ALL-OUT WAR. APPARENTLY, BENSON'S COUNTRY CLUB IS EXCLUSIVE TO WHITES. HE BROKE DOWN AND CONFESSED ALL THIS AFTER BEING CAPTURED BY THE SANDMAN.

THE SANDMAN?!

AFTER ALL THE THINGS I HAD SAID: WELL, I-I FEEL A BIT FOOLISH NOW.

DON'T, DADDY. YOUR REASONS WERE WRONG, BUT JIMMY AND I HAVE DECIDED NOT TO SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN.

WHATEVER YOU DECIDE IS FINE. I LOVE YOU A BIT TOO MUCH SOMETIMES.

GOOD NIGHT, DEAR.

GOOD NIGHT, DADDY.

RING RING

HELLO?

WESLEY! HELLO! NO, IT'S ALL RIGHT. I WAS STILL UP.

WHY, YES. AS A MATTER OF FACT I *AM* FREE FOR DINNER THIS WEEKEND.

THE END

DC

VERTIGO

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE

MATT WAGNER

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

R.G. TAYLOR

"...first came the stench

and deep gurgling,

then the shambling figure

lurched into view."

"I can see
nothing
except
the children:

struggling against
the inevitable,

trapped by
a world gone mad
with desires."

THE BRUTE

WHERE IS THE WOMAN? WITH HER ENVELOPING WARMTH AND DELICATE STRIDE. WHERE?

WHERE IS THE FURROWED BED OF LIFE? THE GUSHY, DARK SACK OF MY CONCEPTION?

MOTHER?

THIS WORLD IS SO COLD AND UNYIELDING.

I HEAR THUNDER COMING NEAR ME! OH, MOTHER...

HE IS HERE!

WITH HIS UNENDING HUNGER.

HIS BRUTALITY.

THE GIANT.

AND HIS LUST.

THE DREAMS CONTINUE TO HAUNT ME. BUT AT LEAST MY WAKING HOURS ARE FULL... BOREDOM COULD KILL ME AT THIS POINT.

WELL, ISN'T THIS NICE?

I'M SO PLEASED YOU WERE FREE THIS EVENING, DIAN.

SO AM I.

I FEEL I'VE HAD *MORE* THAN MY SHARE OF NIGHT CLUBS AND SCANDALS FOR A WHILE. A LONG, LONG WHILE.

A QUIET DINNER IS JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED.

I'M GLAD.

BUT, I HAD HEARD THE PROBLEMS IN CHINATOWN HAVE QUIETED DOWN QUITE A BIT.

MMM. ONCE THE REAL CULPRIT WAS DISCOVERED.

I MEAN.., THE TONGS *ARE* QUITE REAL, SO I DON'T IMAGINE THIS IS THE ABSOLUTE END OF TROUBLE IN THAT AREA.

CRIME KNOWS NEITHER RACE NOR CLASS.

AND... WHAT ABOUT YOUR FRIEND, JIMMY?

WELL ... IT'S LIKE YOU JUST SAID...

I--I PROBABLY WON'T BE SEEING HIM AGAIN.

WAS THAT *YOUR* DECISION?

NO, BUT I CAN SEE THE SENSE IN IT.

JIMMY HAS STRONG FEELINGS ABOUT HIS PLACE IN THE WORLD.

AH...LOOK, CAN WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE?

OF COURSE. I'M SORRY.

LISTEN, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO LATER? I *WAS* GOING TO SUGGEST THAT WE COULD GO TO HARLEM. I KNOW YOU LOVE THE JAZZ CLUBS.

MMM-MAYBE.

YOU SOUND LIKE YOU *DON'T* LIKE IT.

WHAT, JAZZ?

OH, I LIKE IT JUST FINE, BUT I'M NOT WILD ABOUT THESE WHITE SWING BANDS REALLY.

IT JUST SEEMS POPULAR MUSIC HAS BECOME A BACK-DROP TO HAVING A GOOD TIME--AND LESS ABOUT EVERYDAY LIFE.

YES, YOU'RE RIGHT.

WHAT STARTED AS SOMETHING FRESH AND ORIGINAL IS NOW JUST ANOTHER WAY FOR SOME DANCEHALL PROMOTER TO FILL HIS POCKETS.

EXACTLY. BUT YOU KNOW I DO LIKE THIS STYLE COMING OUT OF THE SOUTH AND CHICAGO. THEY CALL IT RHYTHM AND BLUES. IT'S BASED ON JAZZ BUT IT'S EVEN CRUDER. VERY PASSIONATE AND TRUE.

FULL OF TEARS AND SEX.

OH! WELL, I... HAVEN'T REALLY HEARD IT.

STILL, I SAY LET'S EXTEND DINNER THROUGH-OUT THE EVENING.

THIS IS THE LONGEST OPPORTUNITY WE'VE HAD TO REALLY GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER. LET'S MAKE IT LAST.

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.

CHEERS.

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AND SO, WE DID JUST THAT. INTRIGUE AND DELIGHT FILLING OUR THOUGHTS. MURDER GRATEFULLY FORGOTTEN--FOR NOW.

A'SSS A LOVERLY SET YA GOT ON YA, LASS...

CHRIST! WHA'S Y'NAME AGIN...?

:snicker: TONI.

Y'LIMEY... :hic:... LIMEYS TALK SO GODDAMN CUTE.

WHA'S IT TAKE FOR A BIT O' THE PIE, THEN-- EH?

J--JUS' A QUICK TASTE. AH BUY YA' A BOTT'L O' RUM...

OW' 'BOUT IT, TONI-LOVE?

RUM'S FOR LITTLE GIRLS, POPEYE.

DO YER BEST AN THEN YOU C'N BUY ME SOME SCOTCH.

UNNHHH...

YOU DIRTY THING...

COR! WHAT A SET! MMMM-NNHMM...

:SMACK:

YOU BIG HARD DIRTY THING...

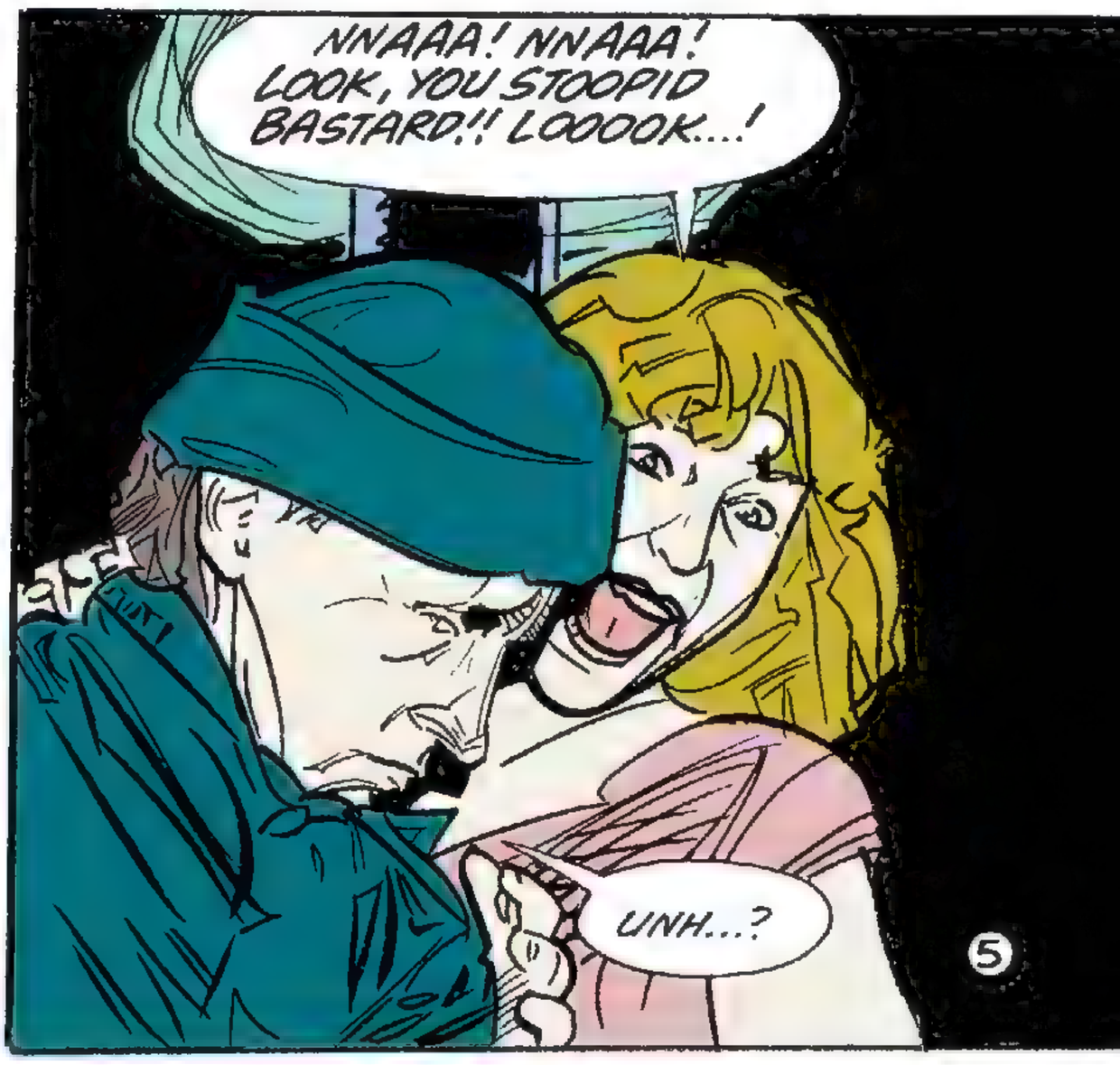
GASP!

GASP!

GASP!

THE BRUTE

ACT · ONE



GLLCK--

KRRACK!

WH-UMPH...!

KLUD!

WHU...
WHUZZA PR--

THNNCK

UNNGHH...

FUD

PRAK

KRRACK

O...

KRRACK

D-D...

KRUNCH

DON'...

SKLLUTCH

...DON!..HURTMETOO.., DON'HURT... GOOGIRL... TREET-CHU-RIGH... GOOGIRL...

WELL, HERE WE ARE. AND I THINK DADDY IS WORKING LATE TONIGHT.

UM... CARE TO COME IN FOR A DRINK?

WELLLL... GOT ANY LEMONADE?

HA!

OH, WES, I'M SORRY. EVEN AFTER AN EVENING OUT WITH YOU, I FORGET. IT'S JUST THAT... WELL, EVERYBODY DRINKS.

ALMOST EVERYONE.

NO, I HAVE A BUSY SCHEDULE TOMORROW, SO I THINK I'LL JUST SAY GOOD NIGHT.

AND THANK YOU.

AND I THINK I JUST MIGHT FAINT, GALLANT SIR.

MMM... BUT YOUR PERFUME'S MAKING ME FEEL OTHERWISE. I'D BETTER GO.

GOOD NIGHT, DIAN. I'LL CALL YOU AGAIN, SOON.

GOOD NIGHT, WES. AND THANKS AGAIN FOR A MARVELOUS TIME.

I AM NOT USED TO MY EVENINGS BEING SO PLEASANT.

NOR TO RISING SO EARLY IN THE MORNING. UP BEFORE NOON...

I AM UTTERLY UNLIKE DEAR THOMAS IN THIS REGARD. THE PROVERBIAL EARLY BIRD, I HAD ASKED HIM TO JOIN ME FOR LUNCH WITH A POTENTIAL NEW BUSINESS COLLEAGUE.

THANKS AGAIN FOR COMING TODAY, THOMAS.

CERTAINLY, M'BOY.

YOU SAID YOU'RE MEETING ARTHUR REISLING, DIDN'T YOU? AS IN, ARTHUR REISLING, THE FIGHT PROMOTER?

THE SAME.

BUT THAT'S JUST ONE OF HIS MANY ENTERPRISES.

YES, I KNOW. THEY SAY THE OLD FELLOW'S GOT MORE MONEY THAN HE KNOWS WHAT TO DO WITH.

YES, WELL, HE'S APPROACHED ME ABOUT CO-FINANCING A SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION TO ANTARCTICA. I'M CURIOUS TO SEE WHAT YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF HIM ARE AS WELL.

WHAT KIND OF MAN MIXES BOXING AND PHILANTHROPY?

A FULL-BLOODED ONE, SIR. MR. DODDS?

WH--?

OH, YES. AND YOU MUST BE ARTHUR REISLING?

THAT I AM, MR. DODDS. THAT I AM.

AND DON'T FEEL BAD IF MY PRESENCE... CONFUSES YOU. I'M QUITE USED TO SUCH REACTIONS.

UHH... YES. MAY I INTRODUCE JUDGE THOMAS SCHAEFFER?

AH. A MAN OF THE BENCH! WONDERFUL.

RETIRED. AND, YES, WESLEY WAS JUST EXPLAINING YOUR INTEREST IN ANTARCTICA.

INDEED. MARVELOUS PLACE.

IT IS AN UNTAPPED WELLSPRING OF NATURAL RESOURCES. THE WORLD WILL LEARN SUCH LESSONS ONLY AT THE COST OF OUR OWN INVESTMENTS.

MAYBE SO.

I HAVE HEARD THAT YOU MADE A GREAT DEAL OF YOUR FORTUNE ABROAD, MR. REISLING,

YOU ARE EXPERIENCED AT THIS.

ARTHUR, PLEASE.

YES, I SPENT MUCH OF MY YOUTH DELVING INTO THE MARKETS OF CHILE AND SOUTH AFRICA.

DESOLATE CORNERS THAT THE WORLD ALL BUT FORGETS.

RIPE FOR THE PICKING, I'VE FOUND.

AND NOW YOU'VE SET YOUR SIGHTS FURTHER SOUTH.

THE FURTHEST.

THE MEEK ONLY DIE YOUNG, GENTLEMEN. YES, WE SHOULD DISCUSS THIS MORE FULLY AT MY OFFICES. BUT FOR NOW... MAY I OFFER YOU TWO TICKETS TO THIS EVENING'S FIGHTS. NO TITLE BOUTS, I'M AFRAID.

I DON'T--

EH, THAT IS... I'M AFRAID MY EVENING IS ALREADY FILLED, ARTHUR. THANKS, ANYWA--

BUT I WOULD CERTAINLY LOVE TO GO.

IF YOU CAN EASILY SPARE THESE, THAT IS.

THEY'RE YOURS.

WELL, LET'S SCHEDULE A PRESENTATION MEETING, DODDS. SHALL WE SAY SOME TIME NEXT WEEK, THEN?

YES, THAT WOULD BE FINE.

PREFERABLY IN THE AFTERNOON.

SPLENDID.

OH, AND BY THE WAY, WHY DON'T YOU COME TO A ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARTY AT MY HOUSE THIS SATURDAY? ONE O'CLOCK. CALL ME IF YOU NEED A DATE ARRANGED.

NO, THAT'S FINE. I'LL SEE YOU THERE.

EXCELLENT.

AND NOW, ROUND TWO OF "IRON DOG" STINSON VS. "ROCKET" EDDIE RAMSEY!

BOOOOO

YAAAAHH!

RAMSEY, YA BUM!!

GODDAMN FAIRIES!!

HSSSSSS--

THAK!

BLEEDIN' ASSHOLE!!

TWO-BIT MICK SONUVABITCH!!

GET UP!!

ONE!

BOOOO!

WEASEL SHIT!

BLACK-EYED PANSY!

STAY DOWN!

BLUBBER GUT!

GET UP, RAMSEY!

GET UP!

TWO! THREE! FOUR! FIVE! SIX!

SEVEN! EIGHT!

NINE!

GLAD YOU COULD JOIN ME TONIGHT, BELMONT.

THANKS FOR ASKING, JUDGE. I JUST HOPE THE NEXT BOUT'S MORE EXCITING THAN THIS ONE.

YES. NOT MUCH FUEL IN HIS ROCKET, IS THERE?

TEN!!

DING-DING! DING-DING!

RAMSEY, YOU STUPID GODDAMN ASSHOLE!!

SORRY, MEL...

SORRY?! SORRY FOR STANDIN' IN FRONT OF THAT SCUM-BAG'S PUNCHES?!

YOU SEEM TO FORGET THAT I GOT A STAKE IN THIS TOO!!

IF YOU DON'T TAKE NO PURSE, THEN I DON'T GET NO TRAINER'S CUT!

I KNOW, MEL. I'M *REAL* SORRY. NEXT TIME, I SWEA--

"NEXT TIME"?!

AHH...YOU MAKE ME *SICK!* WHO SAYS THERE'S GONNA *BE* A NEXT TIME? OR THAT *IT'LL* BE ANY DIFFERENT!

TOUGH BREAK OUT THERE, PAL.

YOU GOT KNOCKED AROUND HARD, AND YOU WERE MOVIN' PRETTY SLOW. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME THAT YOU ATE ANYTHING? I MEAN THAT HAD *MEAT* IN IT.

WHAT'S IT TO YA, MISTER?

I'M INTERESTED IN YOUR WELFARE.

NOW, WHY WOULD A FIGHTER NOT BE EATIN' WELL BEFORE A MATCH? COULD BE, HE'S GOT OTHER-- MORE IMPORTANT--EXPENSES.

I'M HERE TO MAKE YOU AN OFFER, PAL. IF YOU EVER CARE TO MAKE SOME GUARANTEED DOUGH ON A FIGHT--GIVE ME A CALL. I RUN A FEW "UNOFFICIAL" BOUTS ON THE SIDE.

BLACK-MARKET BRAWLS? I COULD BE BARRED FROM REAL FIGHTS FOR THAT.

DEPENDS ON YOUR NEEDS, I GUESS.

I KNOW YOU'D EARN THE MONEY.

THE DREAMS HAVE ALWAYS LED ME TO PLACES I HAD NEVER BEEN. TO MYSTERIES I MIGHT NEVER'VE EXPLORED.

THE SANDS OF TIME DRIFT OVER MY LIFE AND MY DESIRES.

BURYING ME IN A DARK UNDERWORLD OF CORRUPTION.

A WORLD I WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN OTHERWISE.

CLICK

DIAN?

DIAN, I'M HOME!

ARE YOU STILL UP?!

I'M IN HERE, DADDY!

WHAT IS IT THAT SUCKS AT MY SOUL SO ACUTELY?

WHAT EMPTINESS DRIVES ME OUT INTO THE NIGHT TIME AND AGAIN?

TO FIGHT FORCES I CANNOT HOPE TO DEFEAT.

EMILY? I'M... I'M HOME!

OH, DADDY! I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HOME!

YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN WHAT HAPPENED DOWN IN THE ALLEY EARLIER! MRS. PETRILLO WAS HITTING HER HUSBAND WITH AN IRON!

I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO IGNORE ALL THAT NONSENSE!!

I'M... I'M SORRY, HONEY. I KNOW YOU GET LONELY HERE.

IT'S OKAY, DADDY.

I JUST-- JUST FEEL SO BAD ABOUT HAVING TO LEAVE YOU ALONE LIKE THIS SO MUCH.

I KNOW YOU'RE WORKING HARD FOR US, AND SOMEDAY WE'LL BUY A HOUSE, AND I'LL BE ALLOWED BACK IN SCHOOL, AND...

OHHH... YOUR FACE...

YOU... LOST AGAIN, DIDN'T YOU?

WHO ME? NAHHH... I JUST TOOK SECOND PLACE!

OHH, DADDY...

:KOFF!... A--HACK! HACK! HACK! KOFF!... HACK! HACK! HACK! HACK!... A-HACK! HACK! KOFF! KOFF!

...KOFF!... KOFF!

HOW MUCH MEDICINE IS THERE LEFT, BABY?

NOT... :KOFF KOFF:... NOT MUCH. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO SAVE IT FOR WHEN I REALLY *NEED* IT...

KLACK-A-TA-KLACK-A-TA-KLACK-A-TA-KLACK--

HANG ON, SWEETHEART.

I'M :KOFF!: ...I'M USED TO IT, DADDY.

I-I'VE GOT TO RUN OUT NOW FOR JUST A BIT, BABY.

I NEED TO CALL SOMEONE ABOUT SOME SPARE WORK I WAS OFFERED. BUT I'LL BE RIGHT BACK. I PROMISE.

IT'S OKAY, DADDY.

I KNOW NOT TO OPEN THE DOOR FOR ANY STRANGERS.

AND REMEMBER, DADDY, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS...

..."ROCKET" RAMSEY WILL ALWAYS BE MY CHAMPION!

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WHAM! POW! OH, SWEETHEART, YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT!

SO, YOU HAD A GOOD TIME THEN?

KRAK! BAM!

MOST OF THE FIGHTS WERE FAIRLY DULL. BUT THERE WAS THIS ONE LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT...

...NAME OF BILLY CONN.

HONEY, YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THIS FELLOW CONNECT!!

WHAM! POW!

BOXING IS MAN STUFF, DADDY. I'LL JUST TAKE YOUR WORD FOR--

NOW, WAIT! LET ME JUST TELL YOU ABOUT ROUND SEVEN. FIRST, HE--

RING-RING RING-RING

OH, DAMN IT ALL! HOLD THAT THOUGHT, DIAN...

SAVED BY DE BELL... HOO BOY!

RING

BELMONT HOUSEHOLD.

YES. THIS IS HE.

WHY...YESSS. I REMEMBER YOU. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

MEET WITH ME? WHAT ON EARTH FOR?

ON WHO?

THE ARTHUR REISLING?!

VERY WELL THEN, TOMORROW NIGHT. WHERE AND WHEN?

THANKS AGAIN FOR INVITING ME ALONG, WES--*YOW!* SOME DIGS!

YES, MR. REISLING DOESN'T SEEM TO BE SUBTLE ABOUT MUCH OF ANYTHING. AND THANKS FOR COMING.

BUT I'M AFRAID I DO HAVE A SMALL CONFESSION TO MAKE. IT'S NOT ONLY THAT I LOOKED FORWARD TO SPENDING MORE TIME WITH YOU...

OHHHH...?

WELL, I WAS... EAVESDROPPING ON DADDY AGAIN THE OTHER NIGHT AND I OVERHEARD HIM GET A TIP THAT SOUNDED LIKE IT WAS DIRT ON ARTHUR REISLING. SO WHEN YOU CALLED TO INVITE ME TO A PARTY AT THIS SAME PERSON'S HOUSE... *UHHH*, NOT THAT I WOULDN'T HAVE GONE WITH YOU ANYWAY, THAT IS...

I... FIND MYSELF TAKING A PERVERSE PLEASURE IN SPYING ON DADDY'S CASES LIKE THIS.

THE CRIMINAL WORLD IS... INTRIGUING. WELL, WE'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP OUR EARS OPEN THEN, WON'T WE?

YOUR HAT, SIR?

NO, THANKS.

AHHH, DODDS! WONDERFUL!

GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT, OLD BOY. MOST EXCELLENT.

YOU'RE ACTUALLY LUCKY TO HAVE CAUGHT ME LIKE THIS. I WAS JUST ON MY WAY TO TAKE A PHONE CALL IN MY DEN. THE PARTY'S AROUND BACK--

SISSY BRAT!

CANDY PANTS!!

...IN THE GARDEN. BOYS! HELP YOURSELVES TO A DRIN-- I SAID, "BOYS!"

SNOT FACE!! I BEAT YOU!

DID NOT, STINKY BUTT!

DID TOO!

DID NOT!

DID TOO!

STAND UP NOW!

LOOK SHARP!

MR. DODDS, THESE ARE MY YOUNGEST BOYS-- CHARLES AND TOBIAS.

BOYS... SAY HELLO TO MR. DODDS AND...

I'M AFRAID I DON'T KNOW YOUR LOVELY FRIEND'S NAME.

HELLO!

AND GOODBYE! (giggle)

DIAN BELMONT, MR. REISLING. THOSE TWO LOOK LIKE QUITE A HANDFUL!

MMM? YES, I SUPPOSE...

THANK YOU, ARTHUR.

WELL, AS I SAID, I'M OFF TO TAKE A CALL. FEEL FREE TO LOOK AROUND AND HELP YOURSELVES TO A DRINK FROM THE BAR. SEE YOU IN THE GARDEN...

MY, MY, MY...

AND THAT'S COMING FROM YOU! YEESH!

SO HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS FELLOW? OBVIOUSLY, YOU DON'T KNOW HIM WELL.

NO, THAT'S TRUE.

NOTHING PAST HIS PUBLIC NOTORIETY.

HE WANTS ME TO CO-SPONSOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN ANTARCTICA WITH HIM. I HAVEN'T YET DECIDED WHETHER THAT'S A GOOD IDEA OR NOT.

I'VE HAD DR-- CALL IT A FEELING THAT HE'S NOT TO BE TRUSTED.

AND NOW THERE'S THIS STUFF WITH YOUR FATHER--

OH.

SORRY THERE, BROTHER.

UNP--!

JUST STOPPED IN FOR A REFILL.

I'M DENNIS REISLING. SORRY, DIDN'T CATCH THE NAME. MR...?

DODDS. WESLEY DODDS.

OH.

YES. YOU'RE FATHER'S NEW "FRIEND".

WELL...

I WILL SAY YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE MOST OF ARTHUR'S FRIENDS.

FOR ONE THING YOU'RE NOT A BLOND.

AND YOU SEEM ALTOGETHER SOBER-- UNLIKE THE REST OF US! SEE IF YOU CAN'T REMEDY THAT, BROTHER.

SO...

I'M BACK TO THE PARTY. I'M SURE FATHER WILL JOIN YOU SOON.

I'M SURE.

WELL, WELL... LOOKS LIKE YOU DON'T MEET THE LOCAL CRITERIA.

NOT NEARLY BLOND ENOUGH!

NOT NEARLY DULL ENOUGH!

HO HUM.

THERE HE IS, ROSS.

WANT ME TO COME WITH YOU, LARRY?

NO. HE SAID HE WANTED TO SPEAK TO ME ALONE.

BUT KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.

YOU GOT IT.

THANKS FOR COMIN'.

IT *IS* REALLY YOU. YOU'RE LUCKY I REMEMBERED YOU FROM THAT FIGHT. IT WAS OVER RATHER QUICKLY.

YEAH, WELL...

LOOK, HERE'S WHAT I GOTTA SAY. THE OTHER NIGHT, AFTER THE FIGHT YOU SAW ME IN, ARTHUR REISLING OFFERED TO PAY ME TO FIGHT IN AN ILLEGAL MATCH.

REISLING, HIMSELF? WHY YOU? AND WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?

REISLING MUST FIGURE ME TOO LOW ON THE TOTEM POLE TO GIVE HIM ANY TROUBLE. BUT I'M BUILT BIG. I CAN TAKE A LOT OF PUNISHMENT IF I'M IN SHAPE. SPECTATORS LIKE THAT.

AND AS TO WHY I'M SQUEALIN'...

YEAH?

THAT SORTA SHIT COULD GET ME BARRED FROM FIGHTIN' FOR REAL. I COULDN'T DO THAT TO MY...TO MY FAMILY.

SO THIS IS IT FOR ME. KEEP YOUR EYE ON REISLING. TRAP HIM. SHOOT HIM. I DON'T CARE. JUST LEAVE ME THE HELL OUT OF IT.

YOU'RE OUT. AND THANKS.

UNHH...

UNHH...!

SOMEBODY?! SOMEBODY, HELP ME?! PLEASE?!

HEY, KID. WHAT'S WRONG?

I WAS RUNNIN' AN' TWISTED MY ANKLE. I THINK IT'S BROKE!

EASY, KID. HOLD ST-- UNK!

CHCKK

ALL RIGHT, YOU GUYS. GRAB 'IM!

HERE'S YER QUARTER, KID...

NOW, SCRAM!

CAN'T I STAY AND WATCH?!

I SAID, "SCRAM"!! OR YOU'LL GET THE SAME!

OKAY, MISTER, OKAY!

HE'S ROUSIN', BOSS.

NUHHHNN...

THAT'S FAR ENOUGH.

WHU... WHAT IZZIT? WHAT DO YOU GUYS WANT?

SHUT UP, ASSHOLE.

YEAH, BUDDY...

YOU DONE SAID WAY TOO MUCH AS IT IS. AND TO ALL THE WRONG PEOPLE AS WELL.

HEY, LISTEN, YOU GUYS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE ALL TALK--

PRAK!!

THERE YOU GO TALKIN' AGAIN.

WHAT IS IT WITH THAT GODDAMN TONGUE O' YOURS? YOU THINK MR. REISLING MAKES OFFERS LIKE THAT TO MEATBALL GOONS LIKE YOU WITHOUT COVERIN' HIS TAIL?

THAT TONGUE OF YOURS... IT'S A STUPID TONGUE.

MAYBE YOU JUST SHOULDN'T EVEN *HAVE* SUCH A STUPID TONGUE...

KLONK!

YAAAGGH~!

WHAT THE F--

LOOK OUT!

THERE HE GOES!!

SHIT, WHERE'D HE GO! WHERE IS HE?!

SHOOT 'IM! JUST SHOOT 'IM!

QUIET YOU ASS-HOLES!! LISTEN!!

LOOK OUT!

YAAGH!!

KANG

BASTARD!

K-KANG

EVER'BODY HOLD STILL! I GOT 'IM!

FOOSH!

AAACKK-- JEEZUS (choke) CHRISSSSS...

BOSS!

I GOT 'IM, BOSS, GET UP! DON'T MOVE, YOU SONUVABITCH!

DROP YOUR WEAPON OR FACE THE DARK REALMS OF YOUR DREAMING.

HERE, REUBEN! GET AWAY FROM HIM! I GOT A BETTER WAY TO HANDLE THIS...

TWEEEEE...

COME AND GET 'EM, BABY.

HEH.

"...perched above, like some nocturnal bird of prey, drawn by the carrion scent of men's souls."

MATT WAGNER

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

R.G. TAYLOR

GAVIN WILSON
RICHARD BROWNING

Katharine HEPBURN Cary GRANT
BRINGING UP BABY with Charlie RUGGLES
WELL, THAT WAS FUN-- EH, DIAN? GOD SAVE ME FROM EVER HAVING KIDS-- BUT NOT FROM CARY GRANT! MY LORD, THAT MAN IS LUSCIOUS.
A TAD TOO PERFECT FOR MY TASTES.
WAIT TILL D'CROWD DIES DOWN, PAULEY.
MMM -- NOT FOR MINE. I HEAR RUMORS THAT HE'S ACTUALLY A FAERIE THOUGH.
LOOK, DERE'S MORE PICTURES AT THE ENTRANCE!
(sigh) I SURE WOULD LOVE A SHOT AT CURING HIM OF THAT AFFLICTION!
IT'S NOT A DISEASE, CAROL.
I TINK DEY GOT STUFF FROM FLASH GORDON'S TRIP TO MARS!!
PAULEY...
I KNEW I'D FIND YOOS DOWN HERE AT DIS SIN-PALACE!
I TOLD YOOS T'STAY AWAY FROM HERE!!
AWW, MAAA! I JUST WANTED...
WHO GIVES A SHIT WHAT YOU WANT!
LISTEN TO WHAT I TELL YOU!!
OWW! MA, I--
AGH--
SHUT UP, LIL' BASTARD!!

DON'T GIVE ME NONE O'YER LIP!

AN' I WON'T TAKE NONE O' YER SMART-ASS MOUTH!

I CARRIED YOU IN MY BODY FER NINE MONTHS...

KRAK!

I'M SORRY, MA! I--

AGHH!!

THAT'S ENOUGH! STOP--STOP HITTING HIM.

GODDAMN LITTLE--

EH?!

TAKE YER HANDS OFFA ME!!

HIGH-SOCIETY PRIG!!

I DON'T THINK THIS WILL HELP AT ALL.

HE KNOWS YOU'RE ANGRY.

IT'S THE ONLY WAY HE'LL LEARN--LIKE YOU SHOULD'A LEARNED...

...TO MIND YER OWN BUSINESS!!

OH!! HOW DARE YOU...?

HERE NOW! WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT?

OHHH, NOTHING, YE GODDAMN FLATFOOT.

PEOPLE SHOULD JUST LEARN IS ALL.

LEARN TO STAY OUTTA UDDER PEOPLE'S FAMILY LIFE!!

THE BRUTE

A C T · T W O

STAY BEHIND ME, MR. RAMSEY. THE SAN--

THAK

PONK

UNGH--!

ALL RIGHT, Y'BIG GORILLA!

YOU 'N ME!

NNMPH!

RRMPHTSS, DOONMPH...

C'MON!

THNK!

UNHH! THICK AS A BRICK!

BUT SLOW AS MOLASSES!

GOTCHU! HEY, BOSS, I GOT--

YYAAAA-UNK!

POW!

UUUNGH--

J-JEZUSSS...

NNNARGH!!

RAMSEY! GET UP! RUN!

NNNGH--

KRAK

RUN, RAM-- HAUT!!

PLATT

UNHH... UNH... UNH... (GASP!)

R-RAMS--

N...NO! N--

PLANG

FOOOSH

NNUHH...?

THIS WAY!! H-HURRY!

NG-NGHHHHH

KL-KLANG

'R YE ALL RIGHT, MISS?

YES, OFFICER, THANK YOU. I-I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID ANYTHING.

BUT SHE WAS BEATING HER SON!

AND FROM THE LOOKS OF IT, *NOT* FOR THE FIRST TIME!

AYYY! LEGGO ME, LADY!

SAID, LEGGO!!

YEEOOW!

YOU LITTLE...

LITTLE RASCAL!

HERE NOW, YOU!

IT'S ALL RIGHT OFFICER. LET HIM GO!

THERE'S ONLY WORSE FOR HIM AT HOME.

FILTHY TRAMPS.

THAT'S HOW *THEIR* TYPE ALWAYS REPAYS KINDNESS.

OH, CAROL...

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YOU ALL RIGHT, MISTER? YOU TOOK QUITE A CRACK TO THE RIBS BACK THERE.

I AM... I'LL BE FINE.

BUT I REC--RECOMMEND THAT YOU LOCATE A NEW RESIDENCE AT ONCE. REISLING'S MEN OBVIOUSLY KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE.

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

I AM... A FRIEND.

BUT GO NOW. HURRY.

"THE SANDS OF TIME RUN SWIFT."

EMILY!! ARE YOU-- ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

MMM?

I'M FINE, DADDY. WHAT'S WRONG?

NO - NOTHING...

NO. THAT'S NOT TRUE. WE'VE GOTTA LEAVE THIS PLACE, SWEET-HEART.

FIND A NEW HOME.

QUICKLY!! PUT ON YOUR COAT WHILE I PACK UP. MAKE SURE WE BRING YOUR MEDICINE!

NOW, EMILY!

BUT WHY, DADDY?

JUST DO AS YOU'RE TOLD, EMILY!! I-I...

I'M SORRY, SWEETHEART.

OH, DAAAADDY. DON'T TALK SILLY.

I'M SORRY FOR ALL THIS MESS. I'M SORRY FOR YELLING AT YOU. I'M SORRY FOR BEING SUCH A LOUSY FATHER. FOR TRYING TO BE BETTER THAN I AM...

...JUST ANOTHER LUG-HEADED BUM.

I REMEMBER FROM MY CHILDHOOD, THE SOUNDS OF MY FATHER'S RESTLESS PACING AT NIGHT. HE ONCE TOLD ME HOW MY MOTHER USED TO SLEEP LIKE THE DEAD.

taxi

IMMEDIATELY REGRETTING HIS CHOICE OF WORDS.

THE NIGHT HAS NEVER HELD PEACE FOR ME.

KNOCK-- KNOCK-- KNOCK--

WELL NOW, MISS BELMONT. I MIGHT ALMOST SAY I'M SURPRISED,

ALMOST.

GOOD EVENING, HUMPHRIES.

HE HERE?

8

SORRY TO SAY, NO. MR. DODDS HAD PRESSING BUSINESS THIS EVENING.

MMM... I SUSPECTED AS MUCH. WHA--?

WHY, SIR! I...I--I DIDN'T HEAR YOU COME IN!

NGUH... I NEE--OH! HELLO, DIAN!

YES, HUMPHRIES, I JUST CAME IN THROUGH THE BACK WAY.

THAT'S FUNNY.

I JUST ARRIVED IN A CAB AND I DIDN'T SEE YOUR CAR PULL IN BEHIND US.

OH.

WELL... WE MUST 'VE JUST MISSED EACH OTHER.

BUT, HAPPILY... NOT ALTOGETHER.

YES, I'M GLAD.

BUT YOU LOOK RATHER TIRED. PERHAPS I SHOULDN'T STAY...?

NONSENSE. I'M NEVER TOO TIRED FOR ONE OF OUR SPECIAL GAB SESSIONS.

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME TEA?

NO THANKS.

SO, DIAN...

NN-GHHH...

WH-WHAT'S ON THAT TENACIOUS MIND OF YOURS THIS EVENING?

WES?!

ARE...ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

FINE. I'M FINE. JUST A BIT OF INDIGESTION.

I, UH...I HAD A CURRY FOR DINNER. I SHOULD KNOW BETTER.

BUT WHAT'S UP WITH YOU? MORE DIRT ABOUT ARTHUR REISLING?

NO, NOTHING SO EXCITING. THIS IS... WELL, I WENT TO A MOVIE WITH MY FRIEND CAROL THIS EVENING. AND AFTERWARDS--RIGHT OUTSIDE THE THEATER--THERE WAS A WOMAN BEATING HER CHILD.

HOW OLD WAS THE CHILD?

A BOY OF ABOUT SEVEN.

THE THING WAS, NO ONE TRIED TO INTERCEDE. I MEAN, THERE WAS A WHOLE CROWD OF PEOPLE MILLING ABOUT AND THEY ALL JUST ACTED AS IF NOTHING WERE WRONG.

10

HORRIBLE.

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP IN THE FAR EAST, SUCH SCENES WERE COMMON. I ONCE SAW A VENDOR BREAK HIS SON'S ARM FOR GIVING THE WRONG CHANGE TO A CUSTOMER. NO ONE EVEN BLINKED.

WELL, FINALLY, I COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE AND SO I--I STEPPED INTO THE FRAY. NEARLY HAD TO FIGHT THE WOMAN OFF, MYSELF...

GOOD FOR YOU, DIAN. BRAVO.

SO YOU DON'T THINK I WAS OUT OF LINE? THAT I OVERSTEPPED...

OF COURSE NOT.

THE WORLD WOULD BE A BETTER PLACE IF MORE PEOPLE SPOKE UP WHEN THEY WITNESS INJUSTICE.

:sigh:

SOME DAY I'LL FIGURE OUT JUST WHERE MY HEAD MEETS MY HEART AND THEN YOU WON'T BE PESTERED BY ALL MY SILLY CONFUSIONS.

GOD F--UNNGH! GOD FORBID.

GOODNIGHT, WES. TAKE A BROMO AND GET SOME REST.

CALL ME SOON?

BET ON IT!

NNGHH...

BUT NOT ON MY "HEART-BURNED" RIBS!

EXCELLENT, FRANCESCO.

YES, TOMORROW EVENING ON MY YACHT.

I'M ANXIOUS TO DISCUSS THIS VENTURE MORE FULLY WITH YOU. MM-HMM...YES.

UNTIL THE SNOW FALLS, THEN...

GOODBYE.

YES, WHAT IS IT, DENNIS?

YOU MAKE ME ILL WITH YOUR CONSTANT PACING.

I JUST HEARD FROM MURPHY. RAMSEY GOT AWAY-- *AFTER* TALKING TO THE POLICE.

OUR... *FAIL-SAFE* PLAN DIDN'T WORK.

MURPHY CLAIMS RAMSEY HAD SOME MASKED COMPANION. LEVELLED THE BRUTE WITH SOME SORT OF KNOCKOUT GAS.

DISTRESSING. WELL, I SUPPOSE THERE'S NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO TREAT MR. RAMSEY TO A MORE FINAL SOLUTION.

I THOUGHT AS MUCH.

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AND ANY FAMILY THE BASTARD MIGHT HAVE, DENNIS.

DADDY!!

DADDY, I CAUGHT A FROG IN THE GARDEN BUT TOBY KILLED IT WITH A STICK!

DADDY!!

FATHER!

FATHER, I'M HUNGRY! I WANT MY LUNCH NOW!!

BOYS...

HUNGRY!

I WANNA DRAW!

DENNIS, I'M LATE FOR A MEETING.

TAKE THE BOYS TO THE KITCHEN AND SEE THAT THEY GET SOME LUNCH.

RIGHTO, DAD.

'BYE, FATHER! GOOD-BYE--

NNGPHH--!

HEEEY!

YOU PUSHED ME!!

DID TOO!

DID NOT!

YOU... SHITHEAD!

WHAT?!

BOYS WILL BE BOYS.

OH, YES...

AS THE DREAM FALLS OVER AND THROUGH ME...

...SNOW DRIFTS ACROSS A BLEAK AND DIRTY WORLD. BLANKETING. SOOTHING. MESMERIZING.

UNTIL A BLIZZARD BEGINS TO FORM. OBLITERATING ALL. EVEN THE VOID-THAT-IS-A-MAN...

I CAN SEE NOTHING.

EXCEPT THE CHILDREN. STRUGGLING AGAINST THE INEVITABLE. TRAPPED BY A WORLD GONE MAD WITH DESIRES.

THEIR TEAR-STAINED EYES ARE HOLLOW, CARVED BY TRAGEDY AND FEAR.

I WATCH AS THEY DROWN IN THE SOLID WATERS OF INDIFFERENCE.

THEIR FUTURES SILENCED BY NEGLECT.

THEIR INNOCENCE TRAMPLED...

...BY GREED.

SHIT!

LOOKS LIKE WE MISSED 'EM, MURPH.

DAMMIT!!

I KNEW WE SHOULD'A COME LAST NIGHT! GODDAMMIT!!

I TELL YA, DAT BIG BITCH IS MORE TROUBLE... SEARCH IT.

LEFT A LOT O' STUFF. DEY WUZ IN A RUSH.

I GOT A PAIR O' LITTLE GIRL'S PANTIES, ER, I MEAN...

AN' HERE'S AN ORPHAN ANNIE RING.

NO WOMEN'S STUFF, THOUGH.

ALL RIGHT, LET'S BEAT IT. AT LEAST WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE LOOKIN' FOR NOW.

HE'S GOT A KID WIT' HIM. THAT SHOULD MAKE THINGS EASIER.

YOU DOIN' OKAY, SWEETHEART?

JUST A LITTLE COLD, DADDY. IS OUR NEW HOME MUCH FURTHER? I'M REALLY HUNGRY, TOO.

I HOPE SO, BABY. THERE'S ANOTHER PLACE I HEARD ABOUT THAT'S ONLY A FEW BLOCKS FROM HERE.

I'M SORRY, SWEETHEART. THE MAN WANTED TOO MUCH MONEY JUST TO EVEN MOVE IN. WE-- WE'VE GOT TO KEEP LOOKING.

MY TOES FEEL LIKE THEY'RE ON FIRE, DADDY. AND MY TUMMY'S *REALLY* HUNGRY NOW.

WHERE ARE WE GOING, NEXT?

I... I DON'T KNOW, BABY. DO YOU WANT TO WEAR MY JACKET?

NO, I'LL BE OKA-- HACK! KOFF-KOFF. KOFF! HACK! HACK! HACK! KOFF!

HACK! HACK! KOFF!

HERE, BABY, SIT DOWN. WRAP YOURSELF IN THIS.

HACK! HACK! KOFF-KOFF-KOFF!

Y'LITTLE GIRL'S A LUNGER, EH?

UMM... YEAH. BUT DON'T WORRY, WE WAS JUST MOVIN' ON.

NAH. HAD A SISTER DIED O' THAT. AWFUL COLD OUT FOR SOMEONE WITH THE TB, THOUGH.

WE... WERE EVICTED FROM OUR BUILDING.

GODDAMN BASTARD LANDLORDS.

NEVER MET ONE OF 'EM WASN'T THE MOST COLD-HEARTED SCUM-SUCKERS ON EARTH.

THAT'S TOO BAD, BROTHER.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME, LITTLE LADY?

EM-:KOFF!:... EMILY RAMSEY. AND MY FATHER'S NAME IS CHARLES.

WELL, PLEASED TO MEET YOU BOTH. I'M WILBUR SCHENCK.

I'VE GOT AN ABANDONED SHACK NOT FAR FROM HERE THAT I BEEN SQUATTIN' IN.

IT AIN'T MUCH, BUT YOU'RE WELCOME TO SHARE IT. LEAST KEEP YEZ OUTTA THIS WIND.

WELLLL... I DON'T KNOW, MR. SCHENCK. THAT'S VERY KIND, BUT WE...

HACK! KOFF! KOFF!

OKAY, MR. SCHENCK. AND THANK YOU.

PLEASE, DADDY? JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE?! KOFF-KOFF-KOFF! JUST UNTIL MY HANDS GET WARM?

NOT NECESSARY, BROTHER. ENJOY THE COMPANY I WILL.

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WELCOME, MY FRIEND! WELCOME ABOARD THE *LADY KILLER!* I'M SO DELIGHTED TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

MY PLEASURE, MR. REISLING.

MY FATHER SENDS HIS REGARDS AND HOPES THAT WE CAN COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING IN THIS MATTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

OF COURSE, FRANCESCO! OF COURSE. WE ARE, AFTER ALL, MEN OF ACTION, NO?

SO, EXACTLY HOW MUCH HEROIN DO YOU HAVE AVAILABLE?

FORTY-FIVE KILOS.

YOURS FOR TWO-HUNDRED THOUSAND.

A SIZABLE FIGURE--IN ALL RESPECTS.

INDEED.

BUT YOU INSISTED ON QUALITY, AND THIS IS PURE AS SILK FROM THE VIRGIN'S VEIL.

MARVELOUS, MY FRIEND. MARVELOUS.

I FIND YOUR PRICE QUITE AGREEABLE. IT SEEMS WE'VE MADE A DEAL!

BUONO.

STILL, MY FATHER HAS INSTRUCTED ME TO ASK... WE HANDLE ALL THE NIGGER TRADE AND THE SPICS. CHINATOWN HAS ITS OWN TRAFFIC.

TELL ME, MR. REISLING, WHERE DO YOU INTEND TO MOVE THIS STUFF? WHO IS YOUR MARKETPLACE?

A MARKET AS YET UNTAPPED BY YOUR FAMILIES, MY FRIEND.

LET'S JUST SAY THAT I HAVE FRIENDS ON THE COAST.

19

DADDY, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CHARITY ORGANIZATIONS FOR CHILDREN?

I'M... INTERESTED.

I KNOW THERE ARE SEVERAL, DIAN. WHY DO YOU ASK?

ACTUALLY, THE PERSON TO ASK IS JUDGE SCHAEFFER. HE WAS HIGHLY ACTIVE IN THE JUVENILE COURT SYSTEM FOR A WHILE. IN FACT, I BELIEVE I DO HAVE SOME PHONE NUMBERS IN MY DEN.

I'LL FETCH THEM.

WHAT BROUGHT THIS ON?

OH, CALL IT A WHIM... BUT ONE I'M CONSIDERING SERIOUSLY.

DADDY...?

DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME?

I SAID-- :GASP:

YOU, AGAIN.

IT IS THE FACE OF CORRUPTION THAT ONCE AGAIN BRINGS ME TO YOUR HOME, DISTRICT ATTORNEY. A RIVER OF FILTH THAT WILL NOT LET ME REST UNTIL IT IS DAMMED...

...OR DESTROYED.

BUT I WOULD PREFER SPEAKING TO YOU IN PRIVATE-- WITHOUT THE ATTENTION OF YOUR DAUGHTER.

YES, OF COURSE.

DIAN, DARLING, WAIT IN THE FRONT ROOM FOR ME. I-I'LL BE FINE, HERE.

AND MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO CONTACT THE POLICE AS YET EITHER, MISS BELMONT.

NOW THEN, UMM... SANDMAN.

I KNOW THAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY INVESTIGATING VARIOUS ALLEGATIONS AGAINST ARTHUR REISLING. HE IS A CLEVER AND HEARTLESS MAN--THE TYPE THAT USUALLY AVOIDS CAPTURE.

BUT NONE CAN ESCAPE THE SANDMAN'S DARK DREAM.

YES, WE'VE HEARD RUMORS THAT HE'S INVOLVED IN UNLICENSED BOXING...GLADIATORIAL BOUTS.

ILLEGAL FIGHTING IS ONLY THE TIP OF HIS BLACK ICEBERG.

HIS MEN HAVE TWICE ATTEMPTED TO KILL YOUR INFORMER, CHARLES RAMSEY.

HOW DID YOU KNO--

AND HE IS CURRENTLY ARRANGING WITH THE GAMBONI FAMILY TO DISTRIBUTE A LARGE QUANTITY OF HEROIN.

GOOD LORD! THE GAMBONIS...

REISLING'S MEN BRING WITH THEM AN ENFORCER--A BRUTE OF IMMENSE SIZE AND STRENGTH.

TELL YOUR MEN TO BEWARE. I HAVE ALREADY FELT THE FORCE OF ITS WRATH,

I WILL CONTACT YOU AGAIN WHEN I LEARN MORE OF THIS TRANSACTION.

GOODBYE, MR. SANDMAN--FOR NOW.

WE'LL BE READY.

AND THANK YOU.

22

HEY, YOU KIDS!! STOP KICKIN' THAT GODDAMN CAN AROUND!!

NYAAHH!!

G'WAN, Y'OLD BAG!!

HA-HA! HA-HA-HA!

K-TANG!

EEYUUW! WHAT STINKS?!

K-TANG

LOOK, STEVIE!! LOOK!

YYYAAAGH!!

NNNGGGH...?

K-TANG!

UNGH.

YOU GODDAMN FOOL!

23

LOOK, I'M SORRY! I ONLY STOPPED FOR A SECOND -- JUST TO BUY A PAPER, FER CHRIS-SAKE!

CAN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR!

LOOK! OVER THERE! I TOLD YA!!

RECOGNIZE THAT STENCH ANYWHERE!

CLOSE ENOUGH, YOU FOOL! STOP!

TWEEEEE

UNGGH...?

RRMPH.

EASY, SWEETHEART. THAT'S IT. EASY DOES IT.

DC

VERTIGO

OCT 93

FEB 94

FOR MATURE READERS

MATT WAGNER

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

R.G. TAYLOR

"...felt his bones dance with each blow and then shatter, the slimy meat shoved out of place."

the

3 of 4

GAVIN WILSON •
RICHARD BRUNING

THE THING THAT HAD FIRST IMPRESSED ME ABOUT DIAN WAS HER STRONGLY DEVELOPED SENSE OF SELF.

WHAT ULTIMATELY CAPTIVATED ME WAS HER GRADUALLY GROWING SENSE OF OTHERS.

HELLOOO, JUDGE SCHAEFFER! OVER HERE!

HELLO, MY DEAR! WHAT A PLEASANT SURPRISE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

YOU HAD MENTIONED THAT YOU NEEDED MY ADVICE?

WELL, DADDY RECOMMENDED I SPEAK TO YOU. AS YOU KNOW, EVER SINCE GRADUATING I'VE BEEN A TRIFLE...LACKADAISICAL.

BUT, TO SOME DEGREE, HE'S RIGHT. I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FOCUS MY ATTENTION IN ANY ONE DIRECTION AND YET I *DO* WANT TO MAKE SOMETHING OF MY LIFE.

POOH. THAT'S YOUR FATHER TALKING.

SOMETHING WORTHWHILE.

ANYWAY, I'VE TAKEN AN INTEREST IN THE WELFARE OF UNWANTED CHILDREN. FATHER HAD SAID YOU MIGHT KNOW THE VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED.

WELL, MOST ASSUREDLY! I BELONG TO SEVERAL SUCH CHARITIES.

SADLY, THERE'S STILL A NEED FOR MANY MORE.

TELL ME, JUDGE, WHY IS THERE SO MUCH OF THIS CONDITION?

DON'T PEOPLE LOVE THEIR CHILDREN? HOW COULD ANYONE INJURE THEIR OWN SON OR DAUGHTER?

FAR TOO EASILY IT WOULD SEEM, MY DEAR. THE MYTH OF PARENTAL LOVE BEING INNATE IS JUST THAT -- A MYTH.

I JUST CAN'T IMAGINE... OF COURSE, NONE OF MY FRIENDS ACTUALLY HAS ANY KIDS.

HACKK!! <KOFF, KOFF> HACK, HACK!

GLAD YER BACK, BROTHER. I'M HEADIN' OUT.

THANKS FOR STAYIN' WITH HER, MR. SCHENCK.

HERE, BABY. I KNOW THERE'S NOT MUCH LEFT, BUT I FOUND A JOB TODAY.

TAKE SOME OF YOUR MEDICINE. IT'S ALL RIGHT.

OKAY, DADDY...

HOW YA DOIN', BABY?

N--HACK! HACK! NOT SO GOOD, D-KOFF! KOFF!! DADDY...

IT'S NICE TO BE INSIDE... HACK!! HACK!! B-BUT MY CHEST REALLY HURTS...

THAT'S IT.

NOW YOU'LL START TO FEEL BETTER. DON'T WORRY, SWEETHEART. I'LL BUY ANOTHER BOTTLE WITH THE MONEY I MAKE TOMORROW.

THE MEDICINE MAKES ME FEEL SLEEPY, DADDY.

THAT MEANS IT'S WORKING, BABY. YOU GET SOME REST.

I'LL BE RIGHT OUTSIDE IF YOU NEED ANYTHING.

G'NIGHT, EMILY.

I LIKE MR. SCHENCK, DADDY. HE LIKES TO PLAY SILLY GAMES.

I HEARD WHAT Y'TOLD HER IN THERE. YOU REALLY FIND SOME WORK T'DAY?

NO, THERE'S NOTHING AVAILABLE.

NOT EVEN GRUNT LABOR.

BUT I DIDN'T WANT EMILY TO WORRY. I'LL TRY AGAIN IN THE MORNING.

WELL, GOOD LUCK, BROTHER!

THEY SAY THINGS ARE GETTIN' BETTER, SO THEY SAY.

THE BRUTE
ACT · THREE

ARTHUR REISLING OWNS MOST OF THE BUILDING HIS OFFICES ARE LOCATED WITHIN.

A GILDED MONUMENT TO THE EXCESSIVE GOALS OF AMERICAN INDUSTRY.

QUALITIES I HAVE TRIED TO DOWNPLAY SINCE INHERITING MY FATHER'S ENTERPRISES.

AH YES, MISS BARNES. EXCELLENT, EXCELLENT. SHOW HIM IN!

YOUR TWO O'CLOCK APPOINTMENT IS HERE, SIR. MR. WESLEY DODDS?

SHOW HIM IN!

YES, SIR.

NO NEED FOR THAT.

I THINK I COULD HEAR YOUR INVITATION ON THE NEXT STREET, ARTHUR.

HA! HA! QUITE SO...

IT PAYS TO HAVE A COMMANDING VOICE, MY FRIEND! PEOPLE *LISTEN* WHEN THEY THINK YOU WON'T TAKE *NO* FOR AN ANSWER!

MMM. I SUPPOSE SO.

SO THEN, GIVEN ANY FURTHER THOUGHT TO MY PROPOSAL?

A BIT.

BUT I WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR THOSE FIGHT TICKETS YOU GAVE TO MY FRIEND, JUDGE SCHAEFFER. HE SAID HE HAD A MARVELOUS TIME.

I'M SORRY I HAD TO MISS IT, BUT BUSINESS COMES FIRST. BESIDES, I MUST CONFESS I FIND PROFESSIONAL BOXING A TRIFLE TAME FOR MY TASTES.

HMMM. YOU DON'T SAY...?

YES. WHERE I GREW UP THERE WAS MORE, SHALL WE SAY, FULL-BLOODED BOUTS TO BE SEEN. YOU KNOW...

NO GLOVES AND SUCH.

WELL, I MUST SAY THIS *IS* A SURPRISE! IT SEEMS I MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP *YOU* OUT AS WELL, MY FRIEND.

I SOMETIMES HAVE ACCESS TO MORE... *VIGOROUS* MATCHES.

WELL!

I WOULD CERTAINLY BE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING SUCH AN EXHIBITION, SIR. MAYBE EVEN AT THE COST OF MY DONATION TO YOUR ANTARCTIC VENTURE.

MARVELOUS! I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE OF WHEN SAID EVENT WOULD TAKE PLACE, BUT I'LL HAVE MY SECRETARY CONTACT YOU AT ONCE.

VERY GOOD.

YOU'VE PUT AN EXCITED *SPRING* IN MY STRIDE, ARTHUR. I CAN'T WAIT...

WONDERFUL, MY FRIEND. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THEN.

YESSSS, DENNIS?

WE NEED TO TALK, FATHER.

5

YESSSSS...

SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT MARIA. THE SITUATION IS GETTING HARDER AND HARDER TO CONTROL.

YOU BOTHER ME ABOUT THAT HERE?! HAVEN'T I GOT ENOUGH OTHER CONCERNS RIGHT NOW?

YOUR "CONCERNS" HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FOR IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION.

WHICH IS HOW YOU ENDED UP WITH THIS PROBLEM IN THE FIRST PLACE.

WHY...

YOU...

LITTLE...

...BASTARD! DON'T YOU EVER USE THAT TONE OF VOICE WITH ME.

KRAK!

WITHOUT ME, YOU'RE NOTHING! A WEAKLING AND A DRUNK! NOW, GET OUT!

WE'LL SPEAK OF THIS LATER-- AT HOME.

V-VERY WELL, FATHER...

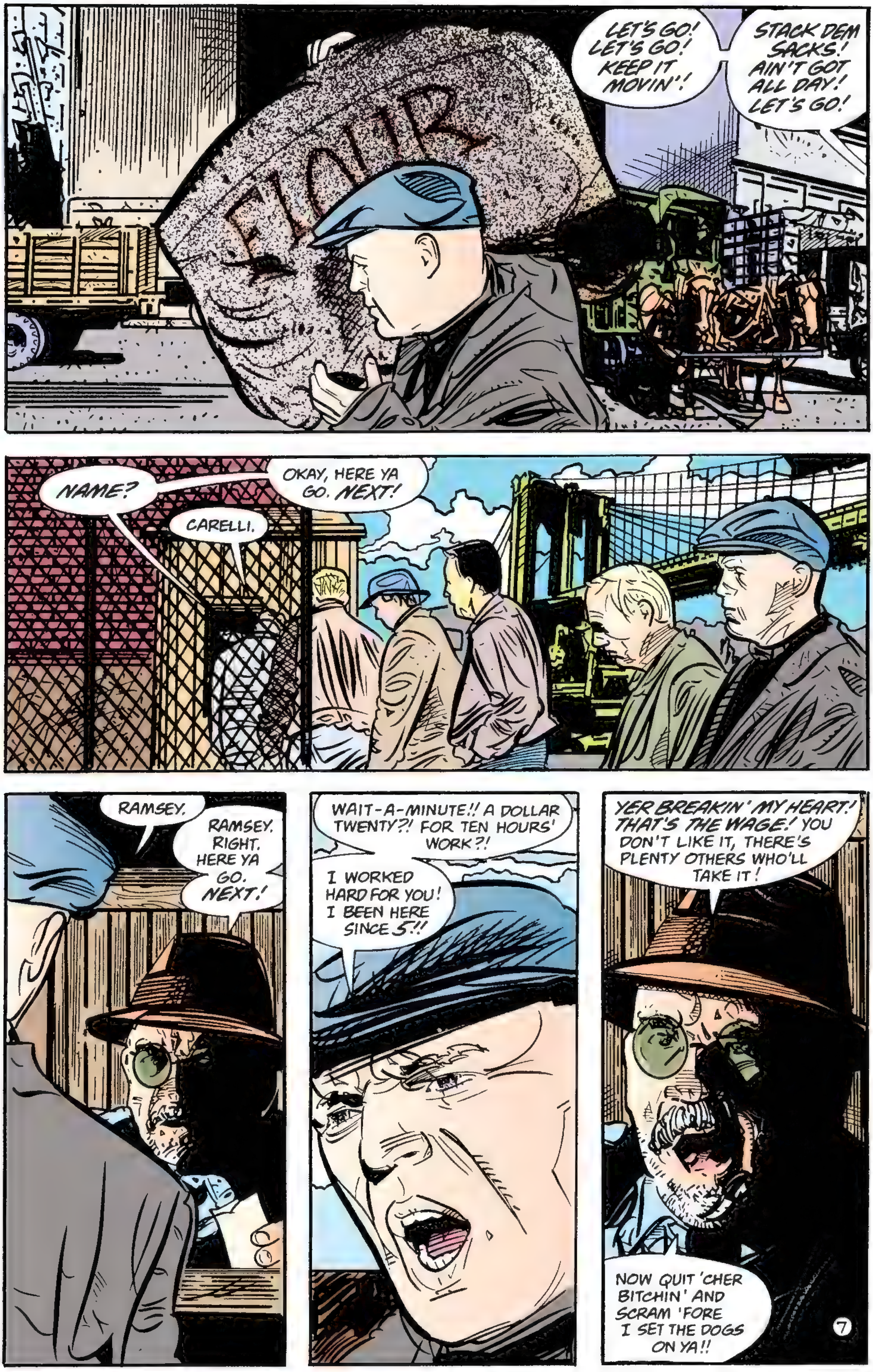
MAY I HELP YOU, SIR?

UMM?!

OH! NO, THANK YOU...

UH... I... FORGOT MY HAT AND JUST CAME BACK TO RETRIEVE IT. THANK YOU, ANYWAY.

WEIRDO.


LET'S GO! LET'S GO! KEEP IT MOVIN'!
STACK DEM SACKS! AIN'T GOT ALL DAY! LET'S GO!
NAME?
CARELLI.
OKAY, HERE YA GO. NEXT!
RAMSEY.
RAMSEY. RIGHT. HERE YA GO. NEXT!
WAIT-A-MINUTE!! A DOLLAR TWENTY?! FOR TEN HOURS' WORK?!
I WORKED HARD FOR YOU! I BEEN HERE SINCE 5!!
YER BREAKIN' MY HEART! THAT'S THE WAGE! YOU DON'T LIKE IT, THERE'S PLENTY OTHERS WHO'LL TAKE IT!
NOW QUIT 'CHER BITCHIN' AND SCRAM 'FORE I SET THE DOGS ON YA!!
7

THIS IS IT, WALLACE. GOOD LORD, WHAT A HOLE!

KNOCK TWICE QUICKLY AND THEN TWICE SLOWLY. HURRY!

KNOCK KNOCK! KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

YES.

I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH "DR" GAMBONI! NOW LET US IN.

YES, WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.

THIS WAY, PLEASE.

HEH. HEH. HEH.

GOOD EVENING TO YOU, MR. REISLING.

MY FATHER SENDS HIS REGARDS.

YES, OF COURSE, FRANCESCO. AND I *APPRECIATE* THE FACT THAT YOU AGREED TO THIS MEETING ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE. STILL, I HADN'T COUNTED ON HAVING TO COME ALL THE WAY UP TO HARLEM.

THESE JUNGLE BUNNIES LIVE LIKE ANIMALS.

IT'S IN THEIR NATURE.

NOW, WHY DID YOU ASK TO SEE ME AGAIN?

YES. WELL, I'M AFRAID I NEED TO EXTEND THE INTENDED DATE OF OUR TRANSACTION JUST A BIT.

IT WAS YOU WHO CAME TO US REQUESTING THIS DEAL IN THE FIRST PLACE.

WE ARE NOT IN THE HABIT OF SITTING ON THE MERCHANDISE FOR SO LONG.

I UNDERSTAND.

BUT AS YOU MUST REALIZE, THE FINANC-ING OF SUCH A LARGE AMOUNT OF CASH IS... COMPLEX. EVEN FOR ME.

GO ON.

WELL, I JUST NEED A FEW MORE DAYS -- CERTAINLY NO MORE THAN A WEEK.

AND THEN...?

I GUARANTEE THIS WILL BE RESOLVED WITHIN A WEEK.

GUARANTEE...?

I WILL FORFEIT HALF THE AGREED UPON PRICE IF I AM NOT READY TO PROCEED THEN.

VERY WELL, SIR.

AND I WISH YOU LUCK AT "SECURING" THE OTHER HALF.

GYM

SHOULDN'T OUGHTA BE COMIN' ROUND HERE, RAMSEY.

I JUST WANNA SEE MEL FOR A BIT, GEORGIE.

WELL, WELL, WELL...

IF IT AIN'T THE "ROCKET" HISSELF-- A ROCKET WITH NOWHERE TO LAND!

HIYA, MEL.

10

Y-GOT A LOTTA GODDAMN BALLS SHOWIN' YER FACE ROUND HERE! I HAD TWO FIGHTS LINED UP FOR YOU THIS WEEK AND YA MISSED 'EM BOTH!

I KNOW, MEL. I KNOW.

I BEEN-- I HAD SOME FAMILY TROUBLE. I'M SORRY.

BUT NOW I'M BACK.

AND I WANNA FIGHT. PLEASE, MEL. I NEED A BIG PURSE AND I'M *ITCHIN'* TO MIX IT UP. CAN YOU LINE SOME-THIN' QUICK UP FOR ME?

CHRIST, YOU KILL ME.

I CAN'T GET NOTHIN' FOR YOU THIS WEEK, THIS YEAR. MAYBE EVEN THIS CENTURY! THE WORD'S OUT ON YOUR CHARLIE-BOY. "*FAMILY TROUBLE*" MY ASSHOLE! I KNOW WHERE YOU BEEN ALL THIS TIME!

RUNNIN' HORSE FOR THE MOB TO THEM NIGGERS UPTOWN!

WH-*AAAAT?!*

THAT'S A DIRTY LIE! *WHO THE HELL TOLD YOU THAT?*

UNGH-- WHY, YOU LITTLE...

GET YER GODDAMN MITTS OFFA ME!!

THE WORD'S COME DOWN FROM ABOVE! EVERYBODY KNOWS AND THERE AIN'T *NOTHIN'* I CAN DO TO HELP SAVE YOUR WORTHLESS BUTT!

FACE IT, RAMSEY. YER A LOSER.

TOO BIG, DUMB AND SLOW TO EVEN KNOW WHEN YOU'RE THROUGH. NOW, AMSCRAY--YOU DOPE!

YEAH.
I'VE HEARD ABOUT THESE. WORD GETS AROUND.

HOW MUCH AGAIN?
FIVE HUNDRED. AND THAT'S IF YOU LOSE. WINNER TAKES A THOUSAND. IT'S A LOT OF MONEY, BUT THAT'S TO COMPENSATE THE TIME YOU'LL LOSE OUT OF THE REGULAR RING.

SOME MEN TAKE A LITTLE LONGER TO HEAL FROM THESE BOUTS. BESIDES... I KNOW YOU'LL EARN THE MONEY.
I'LL EARN THE THOUSAND.
YOU'RE ON. I'M IN.

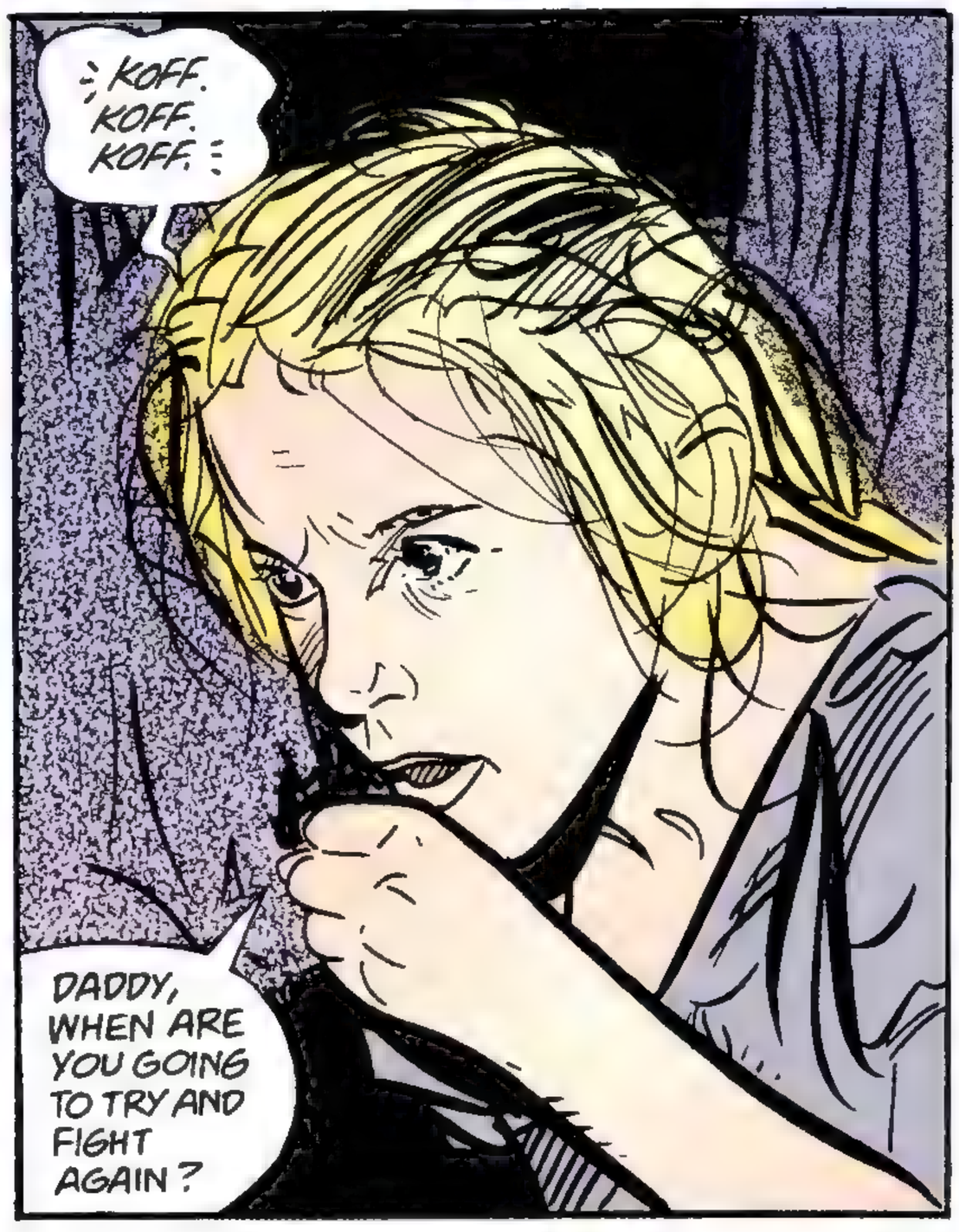
EX-CELLENT.

YOU'LL RECEIVE WORD LATER OF WHEN AND WHERE THE FIGHT WILL TAKE PLACE. AND CONGRATULATIONS... YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE THE SOUL OF A WINNER!
12

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, EVERYBODY, HEADS UP! WHO'S HUNGRY IN THIS SHACK?
ALWAYS.
DID YOU BUY US DINNER WITH YOUR JOB MONEY, DADDY?

SURE DID, SWEETIE.
I GOT SOME CANNED SOUP, SOME CRACKERS AND EVEN SOME APPLES.
IT'S NOT MUCH, I KNOW...

LOOKS GOOD TO ME. THANK 'Y, BROTHER.
JUST RETURNIN' THE FAVOR.
HERE, EMILY, HAVE SOME SOUP. I'M SORRY IT'S NOT HOT.
IT'S OKAY, DADDY. YUM!
13


:KOFF. KOFF. KOFF.:
DADDY, WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO TRY AND FIGHT AGAIN?

YES, PAPA.
WHAT ELSE COULD I DO? I GAVE HIM THE WEEK.
NO, THAT'S FINE. I'LL CATCH A TAXI.
;FWEEET!;
HEY, CABBIE! OVER HEAH!
TAXI
MAMA LEONE'S AND STEP ON IT.
I AM NOT IN A PATIENT MOOD!
MY APOLOGIES, THEN...
PLEASANT DREAMS.
FOOSH!
WHY IS ARTHUR REISLING INVOLVING HIMSELF WITH THE DRUG TRAFFIC?
DUNNO.
PAPA'S BEEN TRYIN' TO FIGURE OUT HIS ANGLE, BUT WE GOT NUTHIN' YET.
WHAT ABOUT THE WEST COAST?
WE CHECKED.
HE GOT NO CONNECTIONS TO THE REGULAR OUTLETS. GO FIGURE.
AND YOU TO SLEEP, MR. GAMBONI.
ZZZZZ
14

THE NEXT MORNING FOUND ME ANSWERING A REQUEST TO VISIT DIAN AT HOME. HER DESIRES, I MUST ADMIT, ARE BECOMING QUITE UNDENIABLE.

WELCOME, WESLEY DODDS. I'M SO GLAD YOU COULD COME! I WAS WATCHING FOR YOU FROM THE WINDOW.

MY, OH MY! AND WHAT'S GOT YOU SO EXCITED TODAY?

SURELY NOT JUST A VISIT FROM ME?

WELL...NOT COMPLETELY. YOU REMEMBER THE INCIDENT WITH THE BOY AND HIS MOTHER?

ABSOLUTELY.

WELL, I'VE BEEN THINKING A LOT ABOUT THAT AND SO JUDGE SCHAEFFER HAS HELPED ME GET IN TOUCH WITH SOME CHILDREN'S CHARITIES.

OH, REALLY?

MMM... THE UNITED WAY.

THEY SAID I HAD NO EXPERIENCE AT FIELD WORK BUT COULD CERTAINLY CANVASS FOR DONATIONS. SO, I WAS WONDERING..

SAY NO MORE! HOW'S THREE-HUNDRED SOUND?

WONDERFUL! WELL, NOW *THAT* WAS CERTAINLY EASY!

WELL, I SHOULD THINK IT'S A POPULAR CAUSE. I MUST BE GOING NOW, BUT KEEP AT IT, DIAN.

HOW MANY WEALTHY PEOPLE DO YOU KNOW?

OH, ENOUGH... I SUPPOSE. THANKS, WES.

YOU'VE JUST GIVEN ME A GREAT IDEA AS WELL.

15

RING RING

REISLING RESIDENCE.

HELLO? YES, I'M CALLING FOR ARTHUR REISLING ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED WAY. MY NAME IS DIAN BELMONT AND I MET MR. REISLING RECENTLY AT--

ONE MOMENT, PLEASE. I'LL SEE IF HE'S IN.

ARTHUR REISLING. YES, MISS BELMONT, OF COURSE I REMEMBER. YOU WERE WESLEY DODDS'S LOVELY COMPANION.

TELL ME, MISS BELMONT. HOW DID YOU GET MY HOME NUMBER?

OH THAT.

I'VE DONE SOME LEGAL CLERKING. IT'S NOT REALLY THAT HARD TO FIND UN-LISTED NUMBERS IF ONE KNOWS HOW.

IT'S NOT FOR ME.

YOU SEE, I'VE JUST STARTED WORKING WITH THE UNITED WAY AND I'D LIKE TO SEE IF YOU WERE INTERESTED IN DONATING...

VERY INTERESTED. BUT I'M ALL TIED UP FOR THE REST OF THIS WEEK. SHALL WE MEET NEXT MONDAY? HERE. AT, SAY...ONE O'CLOCK?

I SEE.

WELL THEN, YOUNG LADY, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

WHY, YES, THAT WOULD BE FINE...

DELIGHTFUL. UNTIL THEN, MISS BELMONT.

16

IT WAS LATER IN THE WEEK THAT I RECEIVED WORD FROM ARTHUR REISLING OF AN EVENING OF "SOPHISTICATED ENTERTAINMENT" AT HIS ESTATE.

LESS THAN THREE DAYS AFTER HANDING OVER MONEY FOR THE BENEFIT OF CHILDREN, I WAS HERE TO WATCH GROWN MEN PUMMEL EACH OTHER SENSELESSLY.

THE DRIVEWAY AND LAWN WERE PARKED FULL OF LIMOUSINES.

MR. WESLEY DODDS, SIR.

DODDS!!

GOOD SHOW, OLD MAN! SO VERY GLAD YOU COULD COME!

THANKS TO YOUR GENEROUS INVITATION, ARTHUR.

BARTLEY SAYS THEY'RE READY FOR MORE HORS D'OEUVRES UP FRONT.

MM-HMM... I GOT EM. DEY ALMOST READY.

I'LL SAY ONE THING 'BOUT RICH FOLKS. THEY SURE GO FOR SOMETHIN' THAT'S FREE.

WHY, YOU'D THINK THEY WAS ALL HALF-STARVIN'.

DO YOU HOST THESE EVENTS REGULARLY?

MMM. WE TRY TO STAGE A BOUT EVERY QUARTER OR SO. OTHERWISE I DON'T THINK THIS OLD BALL-ROOM WOULD SEE ANY USE.

YOU'LL EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT?

GOOD EVENING, FINE PATRONS OF PUGILISM!

I'D LIKE TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO ANOTHER EVENING OF PASSION-ATE DISTRACTION.

AND NOW, SEEING AS HOW BOTH OUR FIGHTERS HAVE ENTERED THE RING, LET THE FESTIVITIES BEGIN!

DING-DING

THE ACTION BEGAN LIKE A NORMAL BOUT, BUT THE ATMOSPHERE WAS DIFFERENT.

THE FIGHTERS WERE VISIBLY PAINED BY EACH AND EVERY CONNECTION.

AND THE CROWD WAS DEATHLY SILENT.

EACH BLOW BECAME AN EXPLOSION. EACH GRUNT A CACOPHONY.

HOW CAN SOMEONE WILLINGLY SUBJECT THEMSELVES TO THIS?

DING-DING!

:; pant-pant-pant ;:

NOW COMES THE GOOD PART, DODDS!

UMMM... YES, SO I SEE. GOODY.

NNUNGH--

YOU GOTTA LOTTA BALLS, ASSHOLE.

MMPH!

BUT Y' BRAINS ARE KINDA SOFT!

THUK!

DING-DING!

UUNMPH--

PRACK!

HIS... JAW...

EXCUSE ME, ARTHUR. I HATE TO DO THIS, BUT...

CAN YOU DIRECT ME TO THE REST ROOM?

MMM...?

OH. UH, YES... THERE'S ONE BY THE ENTRANCE TO THE GARDEN. ON YOUR RIGHT.

THANK YOU, ARTHUR. SORRY ABOUT THIS. ALWAYS DID HAVE THE SMALLEST BLADDER...

DAMN INCONVENIENT.

SORRY.

HE'S OVER HERE, MURPH! BY THE PATIO WALL.

WELL, WELL, HELLO AGAIN, ASSHOLE.

COME TO VISIT US AGAIN, HUH?

YOU MISS US THAT MUCH, HUH?

NAHHH...

HE JUST LIKES WATCHIN' PEOPLE GET THRASHED!

I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.

TWEEEE

21

NNNUGHH...?

OH, NO...

PLEASE, FELLAS...

DON'T...

THAAAAT'S IT. LET'S HAVE A LITTLE BEGGIN'.

ALWAYS MAKES THINGS A LITTLE SWEETER!

NO! NOOOOO!!

NOT SO LOUD, SHITHEAD!

CHCK!

GO FOR IT, BABY!

NNNGHH!

SPAK!

SPAK!

SPAK!

SPAK!

YAAA

AAAA

AAA

:GASP!:

OH...TH-THANK GOD F-FOR... NIGHT AIR!

:GULP:

HUH... HUH... HUH...

EH?

MAN, OH MAN, HE FLEW OUTTA HERE LIKE A BAT OUTTA HELL!!

YEAH, HEH-HEH, BUT A BAT WITH ONLY ONE WING!

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

C'MON, Y'BIG BRUTE! THIS WAY!

NNGHH!

NNGHH!

NNGHH!

NNH--EM... EMILY!!

OH, SWEET JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH.

EMILY...?!

BABY?!

WHERE ARE YOU?!

HERE, DADDY...

M' OVERHERE, DADDY...

EMILY...?

EMILY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

YOUR DRESS! YOU'RE...

...BLEEDING?!

BUT--BUT YOU'RE NOT OLD ENOUGH...

IT HURTS, DADDY.

I'M TRYING TO BE GOOD.

BE BRAVE.

IT'S OKAY, BABY. WHAT HURTS?

BUT IT HURTS!!

THE NEW MEDICINE HURTS, DADDY!

IT HURTS ME DOWN WHERE I PEE!

BUT, SWEETHEART, I DIDN'T BUY ANY...

MR. SCHENCK'S MEDICINE!

HE SAID...

HE SAID IT WOULD HELP ME NOT COUGH.

I TOLD HIM I DIDN'T WANT HIS MEDICINE!

BUT HE WOULDN'T STOP DOING IT! HE SAID IT...

WH--WHAT DID HE DO, EMILY...?

HE PUT THE MEDICINE IN DOWN WHERE I PEE.

HE PUT IT IN WITH HIS DADDY-THING AND IT HURT.

I TOLD HIM I DIDN'T WANT ANY MEDICINE!

BUT HE WOULDN'T STOP DOING IT...

OH...OH NO, EMILY!

OH NO, MY BABY!!

OH NO!

NO!

NOOOOOO!

DC

VERTIGO

NO 12
MAR 94

SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS

the

4 of 4

"...as blood gathered around her like spiders. The screaming had suddenly stopped."

MATT WAGNER

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

R.G. TAYLOR

GAVIN WILSON • RICHARD BRUNING

PROUST ONCE SAID THAT HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF A CRIME COMMITTED BY MAN OF WHICH HE DID NOT IMAGINE HIMSELF FULLY CAPABLE. THIS SENTIMENT HAS ALWAYS HAUNTED ME. THE EVIL I SEE, ALL AROUND ME FEELS LIKE IT BEGINS AND FESTERS IN THE DEPTHS OF MY SOUL.

(GRUMBLE)-- SHIT! GODDAMN PIECE-A-JUNK...

DOESN'T ANYBODY THROW AWAY ANYTHING GOOD ANY-MORE?!

HOWDY, BROTHER!

WORTHLESS PIECE-A-SHIT...

JUST MOVIN' ON... EH?!

OH, IT'S YOU, CHAUNCEY. AIN'T SEEN YOUR SORRY ASS INNA WHILE.

AHHH, I BEEN IN ONE O' DÉSE FEDERAL WORK PROGRAMS. FIXIN' SEWERS AND BUILDIN' ROADS.

DEY CLAIM D'DPRESSION IS OVER! COULD'A FOOLED ME. ANY LUCK HERE?

NAHHH... THIS DUMP'S PICKED CLEAN AS A WHISTLE.

WELL, I'M HEADIN' ON THEN. T'HELL WITH THE FEDS...

ABSOLUTELY. FIXIN' SEWERS... THA'S NIGGER WORK.

MAN'S GOTTA FEEL LIKE A MAN, Y'KNOW.

WHAK

UNNN

YOU WANNA FEEL LIKE A MAN, YOU DIRTY ASSHOLE?!

YOU WANNA FEEL LIKE A GREAT, BIG STRONG MAN?!

N-NOW, BROTHER...

...I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT LITTLE GIRL'S BEEN TELLIN' YOU, BUT SHE'S LYIN'.

HONEST, BROTHER. I SWEAR IT.

WHO SAID ANY-THING ABOUT EMILY?

BASTARD!

CHAK!

HHCK--

LOUSY...

SONUVA...

BITCH!!

(Pant, Pant, Pant)

WHAK!

KRAK!

SKRTCH!

THE BRUTE
FINAL · ACT

Y'FEEL LIKE A MAN NOW, "BROTHER"?!

OVER HERE, BY THE BOATHOUSE.

AND HURRY! DO YOU WANT TO BE SEEN?!

HOLD YOUR HORSES, MISTER R.

THIS THING DON'T EXACTLY MOVE SO FAST, Y'KNOW.

THAT'LL BE ENOUGH OF THAT TALK! THIS *PERSON* IS NOT A "*THING*".

THERE YOU GO, DARLING. INSIDE. THAT'S IT.

THAT WILL BE ALL, "GENTLEMEN."

YEAH, YEAH. SORRY IF WE HURT THE "*PERSON'S*" FEELINGS.

C'MON, LET'S PEEK IN ON THE FIGHT.

HERE. YOU *MUST* EAT SOMETHING.

BE CAREFUL! IT'S VERY WARM!

NNNGH...

THAT'S A DARLING. VERY GOOD.

AND HERE'S YOUR FAVORITE DOLL, SWEETHEART.

DON'T KNOW WHAT BECAME OF THE HEAD.

N-NNMMM... PHT-PHT...

MY FATHER TRIED TO RUN AWAY FROM THE EVIL INSIDE HIM. I, IN TURN, STRUGGLE TO DEFEAT IT.

THE BIG EVENT'S ALL DONE WITH, HUH? WELL, THANKS FOR AN... INVIGORATING EVENING, ARTHUR.

CERTAINLY, DODDS! I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO MISS SO MUCH OF IT.

OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT. MY OWN FAULT.

I'LL HAVE MY ACCOUN-TANT SEND YOU THE EXPEDITION FUNDS TOMORROW.

AND THANKS AGAIN. GOOD NIGHT.

ANYTIME, DODDS. ANYTIME...

THE SAD REALITY IS THAT I OFTEN SLUMBER THROUGH SOME OF THE MOST GLARING AGGRESSIONS. EVIL NEVER SLEEPS.

TAXI

WHA--? WHY, MR. RELSLING! I'M SURPRISED TO SEE YOU ANSWERING THE DOOR YOURSELF.

MOST OF THE SERVANTS HAVE THE DAY OFF, MY DEAR.

BUT, COME IN! COME IN! LOVELY TO SEE YOU AGAIN. LOVELIER THAN *LAST* TIME AS WELL, I MIGHT ADD.

WELL... THANK YOU, SIR.

PLEASE, MAKE IT ARTHUR.

VERY WELL, I...

BUT, FIRST... LET'S SETTLE INTO SOME PLACE MORE COMFORT-ABLE, SHALL WE?

I'VE ASKED THE COOK TO BRING US TEA IN MY PRIVATE STUDY.

THANK YOU, MARTHA. THAT WILL BE ALL FOR NOW.

EXCELLENT.

NOW, THEN...

CL-CLICK!

WE HAVE A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO *KNOW* ONE ANOTHER BETTER...

DON'T WE?

WELL, YES, I...

ER, THAT IS...

YOUR HOUSE IS VERY IMPRESSIVE. MR. REISLING. *UH*... ARTHUR.

YES, WELL, MOST THINGS ABOUT ME *ARE* SO, MY DEAR. WOULD YOU...

...CARE TO SEE MORE?

OH! WELL... MAYBE SOME OTHER TIME...

WHAT I CAME HERE FOR IS TO SPEAK ABOUT THE UNITED WAY...

AH, YES... YOUR CHARITY WORK. SUCH A *WARM* PERSON YOU ARE.

YES, AND A TRIFLE *TOO* WARM AT THE MOMENT, THANK YOU.

IT'S TO BE THAT WAY, IS IT?

6

TELL ME, THEN...

WHY DID YOU EVEN COME HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE?

I TOLD YOU ON THE PHONE! I'M CANVASSING FOR THE UNITED WAY AND THOUGHT YOU MIGHT--

OH, MALARKEY! YOU WOMEN ALWAYS HAVE TO PUT UP A RESISTANCE AT FIRST.

NOW LEAN BACK. YOUR LEGS ARE VERY SMOOTH.

SIR!

I DID *NOT* COME HERE TO MAKE MYSELF AVAILABLE TO YOU!

THIS IS BECOMING TIRESOME.

BUT IT *DOES* MAKE YOUR SKIN FLUSH VERY NICELY.

MR. REISLING, STOP--

COME, COME, MY DEAR. YOU'RE NO NUN, I CAN TELL. AND WHY ELSE DOES A WOMAN GO TO A MAN'S HOUSE UNESCORTED?

MY, YOU *DO* HAVE SUCH LOVELY FIRM BREASTS.

DON'T TOUCH ME!

WAP!

UH...?!

WHY...YOU... LITTLE...

TRAMP!

ACK-- ST-STOP...

YOU'RE JUST THE SAME-- ALL YOU LITTLE BITCHES! WHAT YOU *NEED*...

...IS A GOOD HARD MAN--UCK!

FUD!

AAAHHHH... YOU--YOU-- YOU...

REAP WHAT YOU SOW, MR. REISLING. LET GO!

GODDAMN LITTLE WHORE!

SHOW YOU...

THUK

I SAID, LET GO!!

URF--

THE ONLY THING I *NEED* FROM YOU, MR. REISLING, IS A RESPECTFUL DISTANCE. I CAN LET MYSELF OUT, THANK YOU.

NNNGGH...

NN... WHORES, NOTHING B-BUT BITCHES AND WHORES... NNGHH...

TOB-EEEE...

SHHH...

I WANNA SEE, TOO.

SHUT UP, ASS-WIPE.

NO FAIR.

IT'S MY TURN. I WANNA SEE THEM F--

I TOLD YOU TO SHUT UP!

KLUD

OW! NO FAIR.

I DREAM OF MYSELF ON AN INFINITE, DESOLATE PLANE. NOT MYSELF AS I AM...

...BUT AS I WOULD RATHER BE. MORE POWERFUL AND SEVERE. MY SENSE OF JUSTICE LIKE ICE. THE MASK MORE PROTECTIVE AND FRIGHTENING.

ITS OBLIQUE CONTOURS FILTERING OUT THE POISON OF HUMAN EXISTENCE.

ITS GEOGRAPHY, AN ARCTIC PRISON OF MAN'S SINS AND SUFFERINGS.

THE BEASTS OF ETERNAL DAMNATION.

CREATURES WE WOULD HUNT AND ERADICATE WITH OUR SILLY LAWS.

FOR WHEN THE COURTS FLAY OPEN SUCH CARCASSES...

THEY NEVER REVEAL WHAT THEY FIND.

THE AWFUL TRUTH OF IT IS...

MR. DODDS?

WE ARE, ALL OF US, STUCK FAST IN THE ICE.

HMM... HUH? WH-WHAT IS IT, HUMPHRIES?

SORRY TO WAKEN YOU, SIR. BUT, MISS BELMONT IS DOWNSTAIRS AND SHE SEEMS REALLY QUITE UPSET.

DIAN? I'LL BE RIGHT DOWN.

DIAN! SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING, BUT YOU CAUGHT ME ASLEEP.

DIAN?

DIAN, WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?

OHHH, WESLEY, I'M SORRY. I'M SORRY TO ALWAYS COME CRYING TO YOU LIKE THIS...

SHHH...

IT'S JUST THAT ...I--HE...

CALM DOWN. NOW TELL ME WHAT'S HAPPENED.

I--I WENT TO SEE ARTHUR REISLING ABOUT A DONATION TO MY CHARITY.

WELL, I WAS NO SOONER THERE THAN HE LOCKED ME IN HIS STUDY AND MADE A PASS AT ME.

HE WHAT?

AND MORE THAN JUST THAT. HE FONDLED ME. STUCK HIS HAND UP MY SKIRT. I THINK HE WOULD'VE RAPED ME IF I HADN'T GOTTEN AWAY!

WHY, THAT...

THAT... SONUVABITCH!!

10

I KNEW HE WAS CAPABLE OF SOMETHING LIKE THIS! BUT I NEVER DREAMED THAT YOU...

I WAS ABLE TO FEND HIM OFF. BRAINED HIM WITH AN ASHTRAY. BUT THEN...TO BREAK DOWN LIKE THIS AFTERWARDS--I JUST FEEL SO...

W-WES?

IF ONLY I'D DONE SOMETHING EARLIER.

IF ONLY I'D NEVER LET IT COME TO THIS...

WES, PLEASE, IT'S OKAY.

YOU COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN THIS WOULD HAPPEN. I WENT THERE OF MY OWN ACCORD.

I KNOW.

OH, DIAN, I'M SORRY.

WHEN I THINK WHAT MIGHT'VE HAPPENED...

I KNOW. BUT IT'S OKAY.

I'M OKAY. REALLY.

DIAN, I...

HEY, RAMSEY! I'M HERE.

TULLY! THANKS A LOT FOR MEETIN' ME LIKE THIS.

HEY, YOU WAS ALWAYS A GOOD EGG NO MATTER WHAT ANYBODY SAYS.

SO...THIS YOUR LITTLE GIRL?

YEAH. YEAH, THIS IS HER. SAY HELLO TO MR. TULLY, SWEETHEART.

TONK

DON'T WANT ANY MORE MEDICINE, DADDY. NO MORE.

UMM... CUTE KID.

SO...DID YOU GET WHAT I ASKED?

YEAH, YEAH. I GOT IT.

NOTHIN' TO BRAG ABOUT, THOUGH. USED TO BE MY OLD MAN'S TRAPPIN' PIECE. HE USED IT TO TAKE OUT BEAVERS N' SHIT.

ALMOST RUSTED TO HELL, BUT IT SHOULD STILL WORK.

12

SO...NOW THE BIG QUESTION WHAT IN THE HELL DO YOU NEED A GAT FOR?

FOR--FOR PROTECTION, TULLY. I GOT-- GOTTA PROTECT MY LITTLE GIRL.

SHE'S ALL THAT I GOT NOW.

DIAN, I'M SORRY...

YOU CAME HERE FOR COMFORT AND I'M... I'M ACTING LIKE ARTHUR REISLING.

C'MERE, YOU.

AND SHUT UP.

MMMM...

HEH.

BUT, SERIOUSLY NOW, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, DID HE HURT YOU?

I'M FINE.

REALLY. A TRIFLE SHAKEN BUT OTHERWISE FINE.

DO YOU... WANT TO STAY HERE TONIGHT?

YES. I DO.

BUT I THINK I'D BETTER NOT. I WOULDN'T WANT SUCH A NIGHT TO BE TAINTED BY SUCH A DAY.

BUT I DO WANT TO.

I UNDERSTAND. AND IT'S JUST AS WELL...

I HAVE SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS TO WRAP UP.

GOOD-NIGHT, WESLEY.

PLEASANT DREAMS, DIAN.

13

UNGGH... UNG... UNG...

NNNGGG...

CL-CLICK!

NGNN...?

YOUR MIND IS THAT OF A CHILD, AND YOUR STRUCTURE THAT OF A MONSTER.

NN-GGAAHH!

PLEASANT DREAMS, GENTLE BRUTE.

FOOSH

BUT TRUE MONSTERS ARE MARKED BY THEIR INTENTIONS.

DINNERTIME, SWEETHEART...

WHAT TH--

THOSE *IDIOTS* MUST'VE LEFT THE DOOR UNLOCKED.

(SNIFF, SNIFF)

GOOD LORD, WHAT IS THAT *SMELL*?!

I--*OH NO!* WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?!

OH, THOSE... THOSE *THUGS!* DID *THEY* TIE YOU UP LIKE THIS?!

BASTARDS!

TAKE HEED, DENNIS REISLING! THE BRUTE LIES ENSHROUDED BY THE *SANDMAN'S* DARK DREAM.

WHO--WHO ARE YOU?! AND *WHAT* HAVE YOU DONE TO HER?!

HER...?!

YES, HER.

HER NAME IS MARIA. SHE I-- SHE IS MY SISTER.

SHE WAS BORN THUS?

NO. NO, SHE WAS BORN A QUITE NORMAL AND BEAUTIFUL LITTLE GIRL.

HER ONLY PROBLEM WAS BEING BORN ILLEGITIMATE. LIKE ME.

BUT YOUR FATHER IS A WIDOWER.

FROM DOROTHY. A LATER AFFAIR. SHE DIED GIVING BIRTH TO THE TWINS.

MY MOTHER-- OUR MOTHER'S NAME WAS ELIZABETH.

FATHER ALWAYS DID HAVE A CONSUMPTIVE TASTE FOR WOMEN. AND MOTHER WAS REALLY QUITE A SIMPLE GIRL-- WHO BELIEVED ALL HIS PROMISES AND LIES.

SHE NEVER REALLY WANTED THE CHILDREN HE LEFT HER WITH.

I WAS ONLY SIX WHEN HE LEFT TO SEEK HIS FORTUNES ABROAD, PROMISING ALL OF US HE WOULD BE BACK IN A MONTH.

MONTHS TURNED INTO YEARS AS MOTHER'S SANITY CAME AND WENT LIKE THE TIDE.

LIVING AS A SINGLE WOMAN ALONE WITH TWO CHILDREN WAS AN UNBEARABLE CROSS FOR HER.

16

WHAT HAPPENED TO MARIA?

ONE DAY, MOTHER'S MIND JUST BROKE IN HALF. MARIA HAD BEEN CRYING FOR DAYS. IT --

IT WASN'T HER FAULT. SHE'D HAD A STOMACH FLU AND WAS SOILING HERSELF CONSTANTLY. FINALLY, MOTHER JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE...

SHE LOCKED MARIA IN A SMALL CLOSET BENEATH THE STAIRS. JUST LOCKED HER AWAY -- AS IF SHE DIDN'T EXIST ANYMORE.

M--MARIA STAYED IN THAT CLOSET FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS.

MOTHER REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE HORRIBLE SCREAMING AND POUNDING. SHE DIDN'T EVEN SEEM TO NOTICE THE UNBEARABLE STENCH THAT SOON AROSE.

I--I FEARED MY MOTHER'S WRATH BUT COULDN'T TURN AWAY FROM THIS TRAGEDY. I BROUGHT MARIA FOOD AND DID MY BEST TO CLEAN OUT THE MESS IN HER CELL.

BUT THE BABY SISTER I HAD KNOWN WAS NO MORE. SHE BATTERED HERSELF AGAINST THE WALLS AND I ASSUME THIS LED TO HER GROWTH DEFORMITY.

EVENTUALLY, FATHER *DID* RETURN TO CLAIM US BOTH. MOTHER, HE HAD COMMITTED TO AN ASYLUM. SH-SHE DIED PEACE-FULLY IN HER SLEEP.

BUT MARIA, THE *TRUE* VICTIM OF HIS GODDAMN INDIFFERENCE... SHE NEVER HAD IT SO LUCKY.

SHE SERVES THE WHIMS OF HIS ARROGANCE NOW, BUT SHE IS REALLY QUITE BLAMELESS...

NONE OF IT WAS EVER REALLY HER FAULT, YOU SEE... NOT HER FAULT AT ALL...

WELL, NOW ISN'T THIS NICE...

FOR ONCE, WE *BOTH* GET TO SPEND A QUIET EVENING AT HOME!

MMM... AND IT IS *JUST* WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED IN MY CASE.

I AGREE--

RING-RING RING-RING

OH, SHOOT!

HELLO, BELMONT RES-- OH, HELLO, ROSS. WHAT?! A TIP FROM THE SANDMAN?!

THE REISLING ESTATE?! YOU *BET* I WANT TO BE IN ON IT! HOW SOON CAN YOU PICK ME UP?

I'LL BE READY.

UMM... GOING OUT, DADDY?

YES, DEAR. AND I'M SORRY. I KNOW THIS WAS OUR NIGHT TO BE TOGETHER, BUT--

I HEARD, IT'S OKAY. AND GOOD LUCK.

BUT MAYBE WE'LL *STILL* BE TOGETHER...

TAXI!

FOLLOW THAT POLICE CAR, BUT DON'T BE TOO OBVIOUS!

REALLY? NO KIDDING! WOW!

18

THEY'RE HERE.

AND DENNIS IS LATE. DAMN HIM!

SHOW OUR GUESTS IN, WALLACE.

YES, SIR.

GOOD EVENING TO YOU, MISTER RELSLING.

WELCOME, WELCOME, FRANCESCO. AND TO YOUR "FRIEND."

YOUR MERCHAN-DISE.

YOU *ARE* SUCH A BUSINESSMAN, FRANKIE. WALLACE, LAY THE MONEY SATCHEL ON THE TABLE AS WELL.

CARLO, OPEN OUR PACKAGE SO THAT MR. RELSLING MAY INSPECT HIS PURCHASE.

SI, FRANCESCO. I--AGGH!!

POW!

OKAY, NOBODY MOVES. YOU GODDAMN SUIT-AND-TIE SLIMEBALLS...

19

HOW'D YOU GET IN HERE AGAIN! GODDAMN--

POW!

GO TO HELL, ASSHOLE.

UNNPH--KCH...

M-MR. RAMSEY?! PLEASE, CALM D--

SHUT UP, SHIT-FACE! YOU GOT NOTHIN' I WANNA HEAR!

STAY BEHIND ME, SWEETHEART.

NO MORE MEDICINE, DADDY. NO MORE...

YOU HEAR THAT, MR. BIG SHOT? YOU SEE WHAT OUR LIFE HAS BECOME? ALL BECAUSE OF YOU AND YOUR GODDAMN GAMES!!

NOW, SIR, SURELY WE CAN ARRANGE SOME COMPENSA--

LOWER YOUR WEAPON, CHARLES RAMSEY.

OR FACE THE DARK DREAMS OF THE SANDMAN.

20

DON'T DO IT, RAMSEY. DON'T THROW YOUR LIFE AWAY TO AVENGE SUCH AS THESE.

BUT, MISTER, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, THEY--

OH, WE UNDERSTAND, ALL RIGHT...

YOU HAVE ILLEGALLY TRESPASSED AND COMMITTED VIOLENT ASSAULT IN OUR HOME.

SO LET'S END THIS LITTLE FARCE NOW!

RRRAAAGGH!!

EEEEEE--

DADDY, HELP! HE'S GOING TO GET ME AGAIN! I DON'T WANT ANY MORE MEDICINE!!

I'VE GOT HER, RAMSEY. LAY DOWN THE GUN.

POW!

LIKE HELL!

UNGGH!

POW!

AACK--

P-PLAM

YYAAGH!

DADDY! DADDY, WATCH OUT!!

NNGHHH!

RUSTED PIECE 'A SH-- URK...

GGH!

KRAK!

TTTT...

UNNK--

BLAM!

JESUS! WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT... THAT THING?!

WOOOOOO!

BLAM!

GODDAMN GUINEA!

THAT WAS... MY LITTLE GIRL!!

ARTHUR REISLING...

EH?!

URK--

FOOSH!

WICKED NIGHTMARES.

23

THIS IS IT.

TAXI

CHRIST, LOOK AT ALL THOSE COP CARS!

MUST BE AN' INVASION 'R SOMETHIN'!

BUT THAT'S IT FOR ME, LADY. I AIN'T GETTIN' NO CLOSER. YOU CAN WALK THE REST OF THE WAY. THAT'LL BE THREE BUCKS.

BUT-- ;TSK; OHHH... ALL RIGHT.

GO NO FURTHER TOWARDS THE HOUSE, MISS BELMONT. THEREIN LIES ONLY BLOODSHED AND DEATH.

NO PLACE FOR THE CURIOUS.

YOU?!!

THIS GIRL IS A VICTIM OF THE EVIL WROUGHT INSIDE. PLEASE, SEE THAT SHE FINDS PROPER CARE.

YES. YES, I WILL.

HMM... GUESS HE DIDN'T HEAR ME.

ARE--ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? WERE YOU INJURED IN ANY WAY?

24

SO YOUR "QUIET EVENING AT HOME" TURNED OUT TO BE NOTHING OF THE SORT?

SORRY TO SAY, NO. BUT AT LEAST THERE WAS SOME RESOLUTION TO THIS WHOLE REISLING AFFAIR. HE WON'T BE PEDDLING DRUGS, FIXING FIGHTS OR ACCOSTING WOMEN FOR QUITE SOME TIME TO COME!

DRUGS?

YES. IT SEEMS REISLING WAS ATTEMPTING TO FLOOD SOME WEST COAST UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES WITH HEROIN. SEEMS LIKE A STUPID STUNT. EVEN COLLEGE KIDS AREN'T *THAT* WILD!

ANYWAY, THEY WERE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF MAKING THIS DEAL WHEN THE SANDMAN BROKE THINGS UP.

YOU SEEM QUITE INTRIGUED WITH THIS CHAP.

WHO, THE SANDMAN?

WELL, LET'S JUST SAY HE'S CERTAINLY OUT OF THE ORDINARY. YOU KNOW THE POLICE FOUND THAT SATCHEL OF HEROIN BURNING IN REISLING'S FIRE-PLACE.

AND I SUPPOSE HE *KEPT* ALL THE MONEY FROM SUCH A DEAL.

WELL...NOT EXACTLY. YOU SEE, AN ANONYMOUS BENE-FACTOR HAS SET UP A TRUST FUND IN EMILY RAMSEY'S NAME.

THE POLICE CAN'T REALLY *PROVE* IT'S THE MONEY FROM THAT NIGHT, SOOO...

I SAY, THAT *IS* FUNNY. WHAT A CLEVER FELLOW!

YES, I THOUGHT *YOU'D* LIKE THAT.

IN FACT, IT SOUNDS JUST LIKE THE SORT OF UNASSUMING THING YOU MIGHT DO YOURSELF.

(giggle) I CERTAINLY HOPE SO, MR. DODDS!

OH, REALLY? WELL THEN, TELL ME, MISS BELMONT, DOES *THIS* SEEM LIKE SOME-THING I'D DO?

The End

R. Talsorian

BEHIND THE GAS MASK

*Art by **Gavin Wilson** for a 1993 poster promoting the launch of the series.*

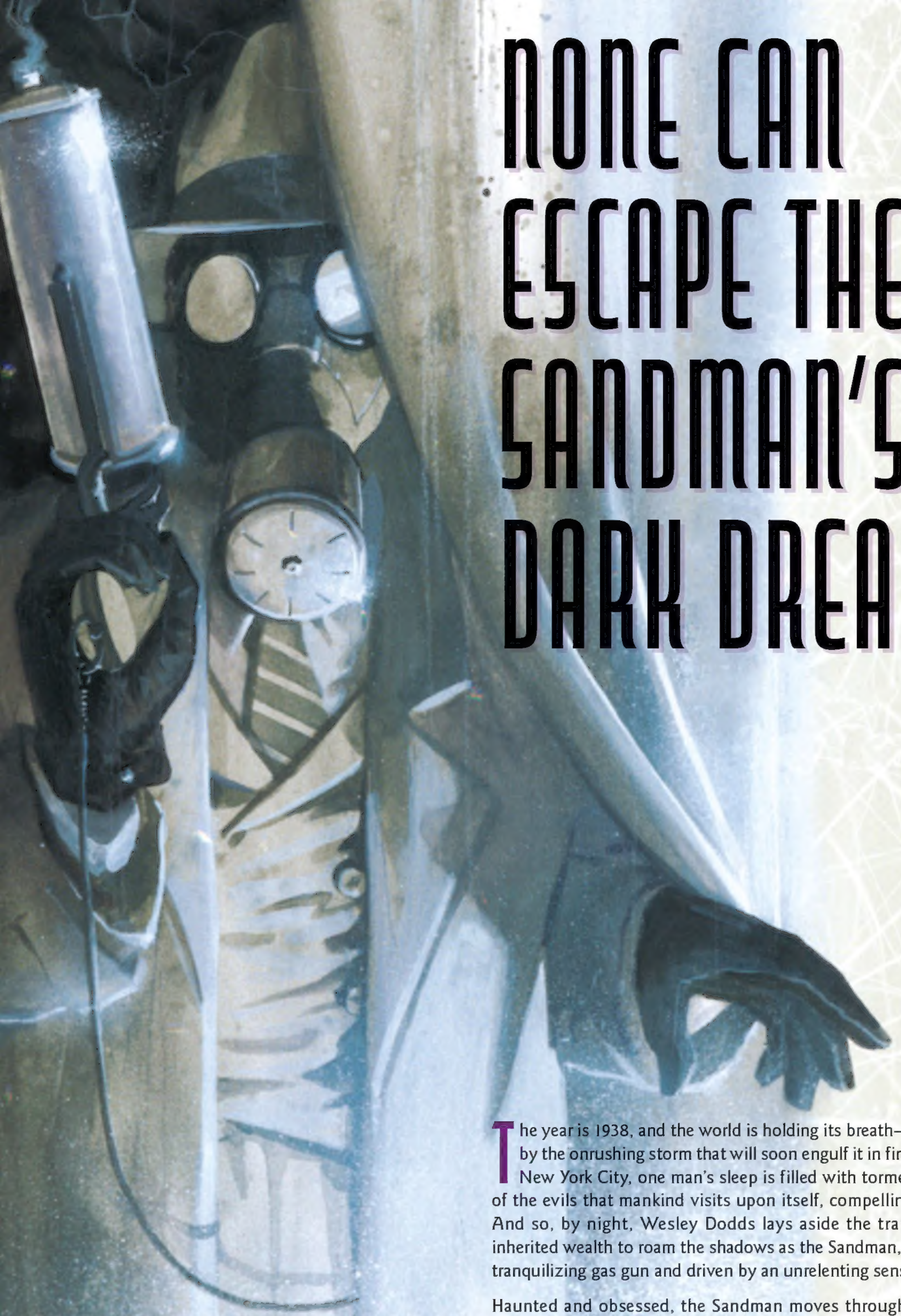
Cover art by ***Matt Wagner*** *for the first trade paperback collection of THE TARANTULA, released in 1995.*

*The Golden Age Sandman by **Alex Toth**, from the 1995 anthology THE VERTIGO GALLERY: DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES #1*

Art by ***Matt Wagner*** *for card #66 in the Vertigo trading card set released by Skybox in 1994.*

A portrait of Wesley Dodds by **Gavin Wilson** *for card #67 in the 1994 Vertigo trading card set from Skybox.*

*Art by **Kent Williams** for one of six gold foil chase cards released by Skybox for their 1994 Vertigo trading card set.*



NONE CAN ESCAPE THE SANDMAN'S DARK DREAMS

The year is 1938, and the world is holding its breath—mesmerized by the onrushing storm that will soon engulf it in fire and steel. In New York City, one man's sleep is filled with tormenting visions of the evils that mankind visits upon itself, compelling him to act. And so, by night, Wesley Dodds lays aside the trappings of his inherited wealth to roam the shadows as the Sandman, armed with a tranquilizing gas gun and driven by an unrelenting sense of justice.

Haunted and obsessed, the Sandman moves through a decadent, post-Depression landscape, stalking the predators who hide themselves beneath society's callous indifference to the weak and vulnerable. No one sees him at his work until he chooses to reveal himself—no one, that is, except the woman who is destined to be the light to his darkness.

Written by comics legend ***Matt Wagner*** *and illustrated by acclaimed artists* ***Guy Davis***, ***John Watkiss*** *and* ***R.G. Taylor***, *this first volume of the complete SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE collects issues #1–12 of the classic VERTIGO series and features an insightful introduction by author and pop culture historian* ***Dave Marsh***.

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SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"